

Bosnian president visits Qatar

DOHA (AFP) — Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic arrived in Qatar on Saturday for a three-day visit, the official QNA news agency reported. Mr. Izetbegovic is due to hold talks with Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, who met the Bosnian leader at the airport, the agency said. Qatar and the other Gulf Arab monarchies gave financial and political support to the Bosnian Muslims during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.



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Upon his return home King: Dialogue between Iraq, U.S. 'right start' to end Iraqis' suffering

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday wound up a five day tour, which took him to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, where he held talks with Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan and Sultan Qaboos on bilateral relations and regional issues of common concern, including the Middle East peace process and the efforts being made to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The King was received upon his arrival by Her Majesty Queen Noor, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Abdullah Ensour and senior civil and military officials.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, who returned with King Hussein, described the discussions King Hussein had with Sheikh Zayed and Sultan Qaboos as constructive, saying that their views were identical on all issues discussed.

In an answer to a question from reporters, Dr. Majali said: "All are calling for a coordinated and consistent Arab stand to avoid any future crises."

On his call for direct dialogue between Iraq and the U.S., King Hussein said: "I have not been requested by any party to suggest this dialogue, but I have expressed

what I believe is a right start, which will follow at a later stage, after the full compliance of the agreements reached, to end the suffering of the Iraqi people."

The King expected the world to focus on the Middle East peace process, "so that all of us will have the feeling that the world is dealing with all issues by the same standards."

King Hussein described his talks with the UAE and Omani leaders as frank and constructive.

In an arrival statement, the King said work is in progress on coordinating Arab efforts and stands on all issues, through continuous contacts with Arab leaders aimed to crystallise a pan-Arab stand.

Regarding his forthcoming visit to the U.S., King Hussein said there are many priorities for discussion with the U.S. administration, voicing hope that he will have the chance to discuss them at the highest levels.

On his call for direct dialogue between Iraq and the U.S., King Hussein said: "I have not been requested by any party to suggest this dialogue, but I have expressed



His Majesty King Hussein upon his arrival greeted by Her Majesty Queen Noor at Amman Airport on Saturday. King Hussein was on a five-day tour of the Arab Gulf region, where he met UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan and Oman's Sultan Qaboos Ben Sa'id and discussed ways of reintegrating Iraq into the international community after Baghdad's full implementation of United Nations Security Council demands on arms inspections (Reuters photo)

itively to the King's call for direct dialogue which, Dr. Majali said, was welcomed by Arab countries. However, he said, if the American adminis-

tration does not want to initiate such a dialogue, then that is up to them.

On the resignation last week of the Mossad chief, Dr. Majali

said "we made our position very clear since the very outset. We will not accept, nor condone any action set to jeopardise our security."

Crown Prince, Netanyahu meeting Tuesday signals a warming in ties Israel's infrastructure minister in Amman today

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Pending the outcome of bilateral talks set for this week, Jordan is set to resume "normal" relations with Israel, after five months of strained ties following the Mossad's failed assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Amman last autumn, Jordanian officials said.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan is scheduled to visit Tel Aviv on Tuesday, where he is set to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Yitzhak Mordechai. The visit signals a warming of relations between the two countries, after the Mossad's botched attack on Khalid Misha'al on September 25, officials said.

But the talks between the Crown Prince and the Israeli officials will have to produce tangible results for bilateral ties to be characterised as "normal" again, officials told the Jordan Times.

"We do not just want another photo-op [opportunity] with the Israelis," one

official said. "We are looking for movement on several outstanding issues."

Jordan will be seeking two commitments from Israel this week: a "real plan" to resolve bilateral outstanding water and trade-related issues, and a renewed commitment to implementing the Palestinian-Israeli Hebron Accords of January 1997.

Also on the agenda,

Israeli Minister of Infrastructure, Ariel Sharon, is expected in Amman today for talks with the Crown Prince, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, and Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, on water issues and Jordan Rift Valley (JRV) projects.

Trade relations will also

(Continued on page 7)

Prince Hassan, Arafat to meet tomorrow

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan is expected to meet with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Ramallah on Monday, to discuss the latest American proposal for Israel's troop withdrawal from the West Bank, a senior official said.

"Jordan wants to discuss the American proposal with the Palestinians, to see where they stand on this matter," the official told the Jordan Times.

He added that Jordan will adapt its position according to the preferences of the Palestinians. "Whatever the Palestinians accept, we will accept," said the official.

The U.S. is currently calling for an Israeli troop withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank — a proposal that has been flatly rejected by the Palestinians, while Israel is talking about less than 10 per cent.

Talks between Crown Prince Hassan and Mr. Arafat are also set to tackle Israel's delay in implementing the Hebron Accords of 1997, in particular those pertaining to the Gaza airport and safe-passage between the West Bank and Gaza, the official said. A.T.

Arafat fails to reshuffle cabinet, renews call for Arab summit Qoureia reelected speaker of council

Combined agency
dispatches

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat renewed a call Saturday for an urgent Arab summit to respond to the deadlock which has gripped the peace process since Israel's right-wing government came to power 21 months ago.

"I call for an urgent Arab summit to review the Arab position and the comprehensive Arab interests" in peace efforts with Israel, Mr. Arafat said during a speech to the elected Palestinian Legislative Council.

He said the summit should coordinate the Arab position concerning not only the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations but also the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Mr. Arafat called for Arab leaders to particularly define their stance "regarding Palestinians' right to self-determination, right of return, refugees, prisoners and Jerusalem."

Mr. Arafat failed on Saturday to announce a long-awaited reshuffle of top posts in his autonomy government, setting the stage for a clash with Palestinian legislators who have demanded sweeping reforms in the self-rule administration.

Addressing the 1998 opening session of the elected Legislative Council, Mr. Arafat acknowledged that there had been "significant setbacks and failures" in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since it was created under the Oslo peace accords in 1994 to administer

autonomous zones of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But he disappointed many deputies who had expected him to announce the replacement of several members of his council of ministers who were singled out in an official report last year for financial mismanagement and corruption.

Mr. Arafat also made no mention of deputies' demands that he quickly enact scores of bills adopted by the legislative council since its election in January 1996.

"The Palestinian National Authority has been working for the two years since the elections through difficult circumstances," President Arafat told the 88-member council.

(Continued on page 3)

PNA: Netanyahu seeks to head off EU initiatives

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian officials on Saturday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of trying to head off any "radical" European initiatives by touring Europe to discuss the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu's tour this week to four European countries is "an effort to contain radical European positions" on restarting the peace process, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said in a statement carried by the official news agency Wafa.

The Palestinian government, meeting here Friday evening, called for "a decisive European role to save the peace process" at a time when Israel has launched "media campaigns to hold any initiatives in check."

Wafa quoted Palestinian President Yasser Arafat as exhorting the international community to take action to force Israel to break the one-

year deadlock in the peace process.

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said Mr. Netanyahu "is working overtime to block the Americans from presenting any new initiatives aimed at restarting the peace process."

"We regret that the United States asks Europe to take part in a war against Iraq [but] tries at the same time to distance Europe from the peace process," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu, in Oslo Saturday, has called on the European Union to help restart the peace process and has not ruled out a new international peace conference.

But he has repeatedly rejected any Jewish settlement freeze in the occupied territories and insists Israel will carry out only a limited further troop withdrawal from the West Bank and then only after the Palestinians meet a long series of conditions.

Heavy fighting in Kosovo continues Albanians hide in woods around shattered Prekaz

SERBIA (R) — Scores of terrified Albanians are hiding in woods around the burning village of Prekaz after two days of heavy fighting with police, reporters who reached the scene said Saturday.

A plume of smoke rose over the destroyed compound of alleged Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) leader Adem Jashari who was among members of the family killed during fierce fighting Thursday and Friday, police said.

Reporters said police appeared to have withdrawn from the mountain village west of Pristina but refugee families in the surrounding woods were still too frightened to return to their shattered homes.

State television showed film Friday of the Jashari compound littered with bodies. The walls of its houses and barns bore clear evidence of artillery shelling.

The Belgrade daily Vecernje

Novosti said dozens of Albanian guerrillas were killed or wounded in the fighting.

First editions of the pro-government newspaper said the death toll was 70 — compared with an official figure of 20 Albanians and two Serbian policemen — but this was changed later to "several dozen" casualties including the wounded.

Diplomats speculated Serbian authorities wanted to minimise the casualties in the clashes in order to soothe dismay among Western countries who fear the crackdown on the KLA could ignite a wider Balkan conflict.

Vecernje Novosti' military correspondent Miroslav Lazanski alleged that gun-running to the KLA was still continuing through neighbouring Albania and that Albanians volunteers from Germany were trying to reach Kosovo via Macedonia.

Mr. Lazanski wrote that police were now concentrating on suspected KLA villages around Djakovica, in western Kosovo, which is only 10 kilometers from the Albanian border.

The attacks this week on the alleged KLA bastions of Prekaz and Lausha in the mountains of central Kosovo were the heaviest unleashed against Albanian separatists since the southern Serbian province lost its autonomy in 1989.

The KLA emerged as a military threat in response to growing impatience with the lack of progress made by political leaders demanding independence for Kosovo where 90 per cent of the 1.8 million population is Albanian.

Western countries have signalled they want a diplomatic

(Continued on page 7)

Sahhaf off to New York to discuss oil deal; Albright says crisis with Iraq 'not over yet'

Combined agency
dispatches

IRAQ'S FOREIGN Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf headed for New York on Saturday for talks with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on proposals to expand Baghdad's oil-for-food deal, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

It said Mr. Sahhaf would also follow up an accord Mr. Annan signed with Iraq on Feb. 23 which ended a crisis over arms inspections and averted, at least for the time being, U.S. threats to use force against Baghdad.

"The foreign minister left Baghdad for the U.N. headquarters in New York to hold talks with the U.N. secretary-general on steps and measures to increase the amount of money allo-

cated from oil [sales] for food, medicine and other essentials," the agency said.

Mr. Annan has proposed that the oil-for-food deal be more than doubled to allow sanctions-hit Iraq to pump \$5.256 billion worth of oil every six months, but Iraqi officials say that war damages and years of sanctions mean its oil industry cannot produce the necessary amounts of oil.

INA gave no further details, but U.N. officials had earlier said in Baghdad that the talks would begin on Monday. Mr. Sahhaf left by road to Jordan because of a ban on most flights in and out of Iraq since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Sahhaf's talks in New

(Continued on page 3)

Annan: Medical supplies for Iraq inadequate

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Medical supplies arriving in Iraq under an oil-for-food arrangement with the United Nations are inadequate, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said Friday.

In a three-monthly report to the U.N. Security Council, Mr. Annan notably said that "despite the fact that a large variety of supplies have been delivered, quantities received to date remain inadequate."

"In most cases, quantities delivered so far cover only 20 per cent of requirements," Mr. Annan said.

"Health care providers are forced to reuse intravenous disposable equipment, which carries the high risk of transmitting communicable diseases," he said.

He also noted that "most hospitals carry out only emergency operations, leaving untreated acute cases to develop into chronic conditions."

Mr. Annan was reporting to the U.N. Security Council on implementation of the oil-for-food deal, enshrined in Resolution 986, which came into force in December 1996. The humanitarian arrangement enables sanctions-hit Iraq

(Continued on page 3)

Hizbollah attacks SLA patrol in south Lebanon

MARIJAYOUN (AFP) — Guerrillas from the Hizbollah attacked a patrol of Israel's allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia in the border zone of southern Lebanon, Hizbollah and SLA sources said.

The Hizbollah fighters fired machineguns and rocket propelled grenades at an SLA armoured patrol passing on the road linking the villages of Sujud and Rihan, in the central sector of the zone, a Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut said.

"One enemy M-113 armoured personnel carrier was destroyed and its crew members were either killed or wounded," he said.

An SLA source confirmed the attack, but said it caused no casualties or material damage.

On Friday, a Hizbollah bombing destroyed an SLA M-113 vehicle during confrontations that left one four-year-old Lebanese boy wounded by Israeli shelling and two SLA militiamen

injured by Hizbollah fire.

The SLA, created and financed by Israel, and the Israeli army control a wide border zone in southern Lebanon which the Jewish state set up with the claimed purpose to protect its northern territory from attack.

Since the beginning of the year, two SLA militiamen were killed and nine others wounded by Hizbollah attacks.

Two Lebanese civilians were killed and 20 more wounded this year in south Lebanon despite repeated calls by the international committee monitoring the April 1996 ceasefire agreement to spare civilians.

The Israeli-Hizbollah truce accord, which put an end to Israel's 1996 Grapes of Wrath military offensive into Lebanon, bans combatants from targeting civilians or launching attacks from civilian areas.

Israeli colonel doubts Israel can defeat Hizbollah in Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli colonel posted in Lebanon said on Saturday he believed the Israeli army could not defeat the Hizbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon.

"We cannot conquer the Hizbollah, which is leading a guerrilla war against us, but we can strike at them and weaken them," the officer, identified only as Colonel Nimrod, told public radio.

"Hizbollah is a serious adversary which has good fighters for the type of warfare it conducts, but in direct confrontations, Israeli soldiers easily get the better of them," he said, adding that Israel was developing new battle methods using commandos and strengthening protection of its positions.

The Hizbollah, a Shiite Islamist movement, spearheads the fight to oust Israel from its self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon.

The officer said army morale had not been affected by the debate over a possible Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.

Israel has offered to implement a 20-year-old U.N. resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops if Beirut pledges to ensure the security of the border area and prevent guerrilla attacks on northern Israel.

But its proposal has been rejected by both Beirut and Damascus, the major power broker in Lebanon. Four Israeli soldiers have died so far this year in Lebanon, after 39 lost their lives in 1997, the heaviest toll since 1985.

Hamas supporters rally in Hebron

HEBRON (R) — More than 2,000 supporters of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) rallied Saturday in the West Bank town of Hebron condemning the massacre of 29 Muslims by a Jewish settler four years ago.

Protesters waved green

flags of the Hamas movement, chanted Islamic songs, and carried coffins inscribed with the words "Peace process," "Security Council decisions" and "Israeli justice," witnesses said.

In Feb. 1994, settler Baruch Goldstein, a U.S.-born physician, gunned

down ranks of Muslims kneeling at prayer until survivors beat him to death. Sheikh Nayer Rajoub, brother of Palestinian West Bank Security Chief Jibril Rajoub, said at the rally that the incident was "a crime by the whole Zionist society" and called on Israel to evac-

uate settlers from Hebron. Around 100,000 Arabs and 400 settlers live in the town, which is holy to Muslims and Jews.

Israel handed over 80 per cent of Hebron to the Palestinian National Authority under an agreement signed last year.

Iranian journalist released from prison — newspaper

TEHRAN (AFP) — A left-leaning Iranian journalist arrested three months ago for allegedly criticising the government has been released, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Akbar Ganji, director of literary monthly Rab-e-No (New Way), left the prison on Thursday after three months in temporary detention. Jamme newspaper said.

A revolutionary court this week sentenced Mr. Ganji to one year in jail on charges of

"disturbing and trying to harm the public opinion," but suspended nine months of the sentence and put him on probation for five years. He was apparently released because he had already served three months.

He was picked up on Dec. 6 with no explanation from the authorities, although his arrest was reportedly prompted by a speech he made at a university in the southern city of Shiraz.

His trial was held in secret

and sentencing was based on the Islamic law of Sharia, which was adopted three years ago.

The paper said Mr. Ganji had refused to defend himself in protest at the "political nature" of the trial. He said that under the constitution he had a right to a public trial in the presence of a jury.

Jamme also said the journalist had been allowed to leave prison last week, but that he refused to do so until Thursday after friends intervened.

Assad meets Lebanese prime minister

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Visiting Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri held talks with President Hafez Assad and other Syrian leaders Saturday on regional problems and bilateral ties.

The meeting with President Assad came after Mr. Hariri met with Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa on "the serious situation in the region and bilateral relations," a Syrian official said.

Mr. Sharaa ended a 24-hour visit to Lebanon Thursday, during which he rejected any negotiations over a 20-year-old U.N. resolution stipulating an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel would withdraw its troops, which occupy a wide border zone in south Lebanon, if the Lebanese government agreed to take charge of security in the region.

The resolution, adopted in March 1978 after Israel's first invasion of its northern neighbour, calls on Israel to "immediately cease military action against the integral territory of Lebanon and to withdraw its forces without delay from all Lebanese territory."

Syria is the main power broker in Lebanon and has around 30,000 troops stationed there.



GAMAA MEMBERS ON TRIAL: Members of the Islamist group Gamaa Islamiya Saturday attend their trial in Cairo. Thirty-seven members of the group are accused of attacking jewellery shops belonging to Egyptian Orthodox Christians, or Copts (AFP photo)

Mubarak wants 'responsible freedom' of press

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Saturday that he favours "responsible freedom" of the press, following the banning of an Egyptian newspaper for printing a statement by an armed opposition group.

Mr. Mubarak expressed his "great interest in responsible freedom of the press and in giving [the media] the means to carry out its supreme mission in accordance with the law, the constitution, and social customs," the president of

the Egypt's press council, Mustafa Kamal Helmi, told journalists after meeting the Egyptian leader.

Mr. Helmi added that there are no constraints imposed on Egyptian journalists "except the law and their conscience."

The Egyptian media has been shaken by the banning of the independent weekly Al-Dustur last month and the revocation of its printing permit.

The weekly was banned after publishing a statement from the Islamist

Gamaa Islamiya group threatening death to businessmen of Egypt's Coptic Christian community.

The Gamaa Islamiya is the main armed Islamist opposition group in Egypt.

Unrest among the media has increased as the Egyptian prosecutor general Wednesday ordered the trial of three newspaper executives accused of publishing an article on Feb. 19 that was "insulting" to Finance Minister Mohamed Al-Gharib because it accused him of corruption.

Meanwhile, the opposition daily Al-Wafd reported on Wednesday that the editorial director of the pro-government weekly magazine Rose Al-Youssef, Adel Hammuda, has been demoted without notice.

In January, Mr. Hammuda accused Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri of "monopolising power," while the Coptic Christian Church in Egypt has repeatedly complained that Rose Al-Youssef articles were harming its reputation.

Belarus president meets Khatami for talks on boosting cooperation

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called for greater ties between the Islamic Republic and Belarus during talks Saturday with visiting President Alexander Lukashenko.

President Lukashenko, who arrived on Friday night at the head of a political and economic delegation, met Mr. Khatami at a presidential palace here, the official news agency IRNA said.

Mr. Khatami called for boosting cooperation in economic, political, scientific

and cultural fields.

"There will be no limit in for mutual cooperation in our bilateral talks. The visit starts a new era in relations," he said, quoted by IRNA.

The Iranian president said relations with Minsk were "against no one's interest and can only lead to regional peace and stability."

"A pillar of our foreign policy is to work remove tension and I think Belarus is after the same thing," he said.

Mr. Lukashenko, on his first visit to Iran since assuming

power four years ago, said his country's "policy is to be independent and not to take orders from any foreign country."

"In this regard we are like the Islamic Republic," he said. "Belarus and Iran are fully independent and can hold talks in all fields."

Mr. Lukashenko, an authoritarian leader, has been under pressure from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to accelerate democratic reforms.

Yemeni plane lands in Baghdad loaded with humanitarian aid

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Yemeni plane loaded with humanitarian aid landed in Baghdad Saturday in the first such flight from Yemen since U.N. sanctions were imposed on Iraq in 1990, airport officials said.

The plane, carrying 36 tonnes of medicines and food donated by the Yemeni Red Crescent Society and opposition parties, landed at Saddam Hussein International Airport with U.N. approval.

The leader of the Yemeni section of the Baath Party, which rules Iraq, accompanied the plane to Baghdad, a Yemeni Red Crescent official told reporters before the plane left Yemen.

Yemen maintains good official relations with Iraq, which has been under U.N. sanctions since its 1990 invasion

Saddam tells Yemeni president Iraq ready to cooperate with UNSCOM

SANAA (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said Iraq will cooperate with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling his country, according to a message he sent to his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdullah Saleh. The message spoke of "Iraq's commitment and readiness to cooperate with the UNSCOM teams in light of the accord reached with the U.N. Secretary General (Kofi Annan)," the official Yemeni news agency SABA reported Saturday. Under the Feb. 23 accord, Iraq has committed to cooperating fully with UNSCOM and to opening up all its so-called presidential sites for inspections to be led by a special group named by Mr. Annan.

of neighbouring Kuwait.

A string of planes loaded with humanitarian aid, mainly from Arab countries, has flown into Baghdad during the last two months with U.N. approval.

Since late last year, planes from Djibouti, Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have ferried in medicine and

food, along with planes from Russia and Iceland.

A U.N. official said Thursday that several other humanitarian flights are awaiting a green light from the U.N. Sanctions Committee. The cargoes are inspected upon their arrival in Baghdad to check they do not violate sanctions.

Clashes said to kill 100 in Sudan

KHARTOUM (R) — About 100 people have been killed and 46 villages burned down in tribal clashes this year in the western Sudanese state of Darfur, a Khartoum newspaper reported Saturday.

The private Alwan daily said a high-level military and security delegation had left Khartoum recently for the town of Geneina, on the Chad border, more than 1,100 kilometres southwest of the Sudanese capital, to resolve

the dispute.

It said Darfur authorities had failed to quell the trouble that erupted between Arab tribesmen and the Masalit tribe after the fasting month of Ramadan ended in late January.

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir declared a state of emergency in Darfur in December to combat armed robbery and tribal conflicts over scarce grazing and water.

Dubai police seize counterfeit cigarettes

DUBAI (R) — Police in the United Arab Emirates have uncovered a major counterfeiting operation of international cigarette brands and detained four people, a newspaper said Saturday.

"Virginia Industries Ltd. was raided by Dubai police towards the end of last month and counterfeit products worth millions of dirhams were confiscated, in addition to equipment and printed material used in the

operation," Gulf News said, quoting police sources.

Police declined to comment on the report. No officials from Virginia Industries, which like many trading and manufacturing companies is based in the Jebel Ali free zone in the emirate of Dubai, were immediately available for comment.

Gulf News said products of more than 20 international cigarette brands, including Winston, Camel and Marlboro,

were being copied by the company using low-quality tobacco and exported to countries of the former Soviet Union and to Asia.

The English-language daily said the raid was triggered by a tip from an international cigarette manufacturer operating in the Gulf who gave police the name of Virginia Industries.

It said the detained suspects were expatriates from Singapore and India.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
16:15 Cartoon — Pumpkin Patch
16:30 Football Match — UEFA Championship
18:00 — Skippy
18:30 Drama — The Border
19:00 — Le Journal
19:15 Documentary Magazine — Le Tour De France
19:30 — News Headlines
19:35 America's Funniest People
20:00 Documentary — People and Places of Africa
20:30 — Killing for Living
21:15 — Renegade
22:00 — News in English
22:30 Drama — North and South
23:59 Comedy — The Upper Hand
00:30 — End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:33 — Fajr
05:50 — (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:46 — Dhuhr
15:07 — Asr
17:42 — Maghreb
18:59 — Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cloud weather conditions will prevail, skies partly cloudy to sunny with a chance of scattered showers, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, occasionally dusky, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. Amman.....06/13

Aqaba.....12/21

Deserts.....04/16

Jordan Valley.....09/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 15, Aqaba: 23 Humidity readings: Amman 53 per cent, Aqaba 47 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Hanna Mansour.....758863

Dr. Afif Shukri.....898863

Dr. Nidal Al-Dahleh.....827195

Dr. Sa'id Jawid.....788285

Firas pharmacy.....5661912

Ferdows pharmacy.....778336

Al Asema pharmacy.....4637055

Natrouk pharmacy.....4632672

Al Salam pharmacy.....4636730

Yacoub pharmacy.....4644945

Shmeisani pharmacy.....4637660

Najib pharmacy.....847632

IRBD:

Dr. Ahmad Qam.....281484

Al Quds pharmacy.....(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Ratiq Atallah.....994424

Khalifeh pharmacy.....985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111

Civil Defence Department.....5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....4630341

Civil Defence Emergency.....199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade.....4617101

Blood Bank.....775121

Highway Police.....843402

Traffic Police.....896390

Public Security Dept.....4630321

Hotel Complaints.....5605800

Price Complaints.....5661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints.....897467

Amman Municipality Complaints.....787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121

Overseas Calls.....010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101

Jordan Television.....773111

Radio Jordan.....774111

Water Authority.....5680100

J. Electricity Authority.....815615

Electric Power Co.....4636381

RJ Flight Information.....44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport.....44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdi.....5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856

Luzmila.....4630195

Khalidi Maternity.....4644281/6

Akileh Maternity.....4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman.....4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani.....5607071

Shmeisani Hospital.....5669131

University Hospital.....845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdali.....5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir.....7751112/6

Army, Marka.....891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50

Amal Hospital.....5674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

IRBD:

Princess Basma Hospital

(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

(02)272275

Ibo Al Nafes Hospital

(02)247100

Other Flights

03:25 — Rome (AZ)

10:00 — Sanaa (Y)

12:25 — Bahrain (GF)

13:00 — Moscow (SU)

15:00 — Doha (QR)

17:45 — Jeddah (SV)

20:00 — Tel Aviv (LY)

20:40 — Cairo (MS)

23:10 — Istanbul (TK)

Royal Wings (RW)

07:45 — Aqaba (RW)

09:05 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)

09:50 — Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

17:20 — Tel Aviv (RW)

18:30 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)

21:20 — Aqaba (RW)

22:50 — Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:05 — Larnaca (RJ)

08:35 — Jeddah (RJ)

08:45 — Bombay (RJ)

09:15 — Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:50 — Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights



MINISTER, LEBANESE AMBASSADOR SIGN AGREEMENT: Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Sami Gammo and Lebanese Ambassador to Jordan William Habib Saturday sign an agreement to organise the movement of passengers and goods between the two countries. Jordan and Lebanon signed an agreement in 1995 allowing the entry of citizens of one country into the other, in accordance with valid entry visas (Petra photo)

Arafat fails to reshuffle cabinet

(Continued from page 1)

"There have been significant setbacks and mistakes made by institutions in authority," he said, adding that the self-rule administration had "both successes and failures, this is how all governments work."

Mr. Arafat acknowledged the legitimacy of deputies' demands for "reforms and reshuffles," saying they were a normal part of democracy.

But he announced no specific moves, saying only that "what is important is to inject life into these institutions, in order to support and preserve their credibility with the people."

Ahmad Qureia, a PLO veteran who was reelected Saturday to a third one-year term as the legislative council's speaker, told reporters later that President

Arafat was committed to carrying out a cabinet reshuffle and other reforms, but was not yet ready to announce the measures.

"It is the nature of governments to change. [Arafat] is in the process of organising a reshuffle," he said, but he provided no timetable.

Palestinian deputies overwhelmingly reelected the veteran PLO official Saturday.

Mr. Qureia, a key negotiator of the Oslo peace accords and an occasional critic of the PNA's autocratic style of rule, garnered 55 of the 78 votes cast, officials said.

He defeated two challengers, Kamal Sharafi, an independent from Gaza who heads the council's human rights committee and won 10 votes, and Suleiman Rumi, an Islamist deputy from Gaza who was supported by

five deputies.

There were eight blank ballots and other deputies were either absent or did not take part in the vote.

Mr. Qureia, 60, also known by his nom-de-guerre Abu Alaa, was the candidate of Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which holds more than two-thirds of the legislative council seats.

Mr. Qureia, an Arab east Jerusalem native and economist by training, is a veteran figure in the Fatah leadership and long ran the PLO economic department.

He was the central Palestinian figure in the secret negotiations with Israel in Oslo which resulted in the 1993 and 1995 accords on autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sahhaf off to New York to discuss oil deal

(Continued from page 1)

York were due to take place shortly before a team of oil experts visits Iraq to start assessing repairs needed to allow Iraq's oil industry to pump more oil.

U.N. spokesman Eric Falt said the oil team had postponed a trip, planned to start on Saturday, until next week.

"Their arrival is scheduled on March 12," he told Reuters.

He said the group consisted of six experts from Seybolt, a private oil company hired by the U.N., and two oil overseers sent by Mr. Annan.

Mr. Falt said the team would look at requirements for repairs and rehabilitation of the oil facilities.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said

in Rome Saturday that the U.N. arms inspection accord signed by Iraq and the U.N. did not end the crisis.

"My message today is this is not over yet," she told a news conference after talks with Italian counterpart Lamberto Dini.

"We need to insure that UNSCOM has in fact full access to all sites," she said, referring to the U.N. Special Commission on disarmament Iraq.

In Baghdad on Saturday, U.N. inspectors appeared to be going smoothly, including one by a team led by U.S. national Scott Ritter, once refused entry by Iraq on the contention he was a spy.

"With U.N. inspectors now returning to Baghdad we are going to test this agreement," said Ms. Albright. "If Saddam fails to meet his commitments,

he must understand that no one is prepared to give peace an unlimited number of chances."

Earlier in the week, U.S. President Bill Clinton warned Baghdad that a new U.N. Security Council resolution gives the U.S. the right to launch military strikes on Iraq if Baghdad bars U.N. weapons inspections.

"Iraq must fulfil without obstruction or delay its commitment to open all of the nation to the international weapons inspectors, any place, any time, without any conditions, deadlines or excuses," said Mr. Clinton.

"The government of Iraq should be under no illusion. The meaning of 'severe consequences' is clear: It provides authority to act if Iraq does not turn the commitment it has now made into compliance."

Annan: Medical supplies for Iraq inadequate

(Continued from page 1)

to export limited quantities of oil in return for food and medicine.

The U.N. chief said that the erratic arrival of supplies was still a problem, despite attempts to accelerate the approval and distribution process at the United Nations and in Iraq.

"Effective delivery has been further impaired by the uncoordinated arrival of supplies such as urine bags without catheters, injectable drugs without disposable syringes and intravenous drugs without intravenous solutions," he said.

Mr. Annan complained that

"the efficiency with which medical supplies are distributed has shown no improvement."

He also noted that because of delays, "all food baskets during the reporting period were incomplete."

He also expressed concern about insufficient supplies in the water and sanitation and electricity sectors.

The problems in both sectors have been addressed by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1153 adopted on Feb. 20 which endorsed Mr. Annan's recommendations for a one-time investment in infrastructural projects.

The council also decided to raise the amount of Iraqi oil sales in the accord from \$2 billion every six months to up to \$5.2 billion.

However, the higher levels will only come into force when Mr. Annan has approved a new distribution plan to be discussed here with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al Sahhaf next week.

Mr. Annan noted that under phase III of the oil-for-food deal which came into force in December, of the authorised \$2 billion, \$101.2 million had been deposited into the escrow account as of Feb. 20.

King will present views on Iraq-U.S. dialogue to Clinton — prime minister

MUSCAT (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali told a press conference in Muscat that His Majesty King Hussein will present his views on a direct Iraq-U.S. dialogue to the U.S. administration.

Speaking before his return to Amman with the King after visits to the United Arab Emirates and Oman, Dr. Majali said the King will discuss his views with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington during a meeting scheduled for March 19.

He said King Hussein did not propose a meeting between the two presidents but rather an idea designed to reduce tension.

"Through direct contacts

and dialogue, the two sides can better understand each other. This method could be very fruitful, especially since many Iraqis have expressed a desire to have such contacts," the prime minister pointed out.

Dr. Majali said in the event of a military strike, Jordan would be the prime victim after Iraq.

"Every time a crisis in the region emerges, we in Jordan are adversely affected. Although Jordan is not a party to the crisis, we regretfully pay a high price," he stated.

Referring to Jordanian-Iraqi relations, the prime minister said: "We do not have any problem with Iraq, and although we neither support

nor condemn the Iraqi leadership, we believe that only the Iraqi people have the right to have a say in its leadership, while we try to alleviate their suffering."

Asked whether Jordan was trying to find a source for oil other than Iraq, Dr. Majali replied: "Jordan is always searching for new and alternative sources for its energy needs."

On relations with Syria, the prime minister said: "We respect Syria's own policies as we respected their decision not to attend the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace process."

Referring to the peace treaty with Israel, the prime minister said: "We find something

beneficial for us and for Syria in this treaty, because the Kingdom is now in a better position to ensure peace on all Arab-Israeli tracks."

The prime minister said the King's talks with Sultan Qaboos of Oman were constructive and were designed to serve the Arab Nation. He expressed hope that Oman and Jordan would further strengthen their bilateral economic and trade ties.

Expressing satisfaction with the achievements of the peace process so far, the prime minister said that had it not for the peace process, the Palestine Liberation Organisation would not have established its foot on Palestinian soil.

"Since the start of the peace

process, more than 160,000 Palestinians have returned to the self-rule areas. The Palestinian [National] Authority is responsible now for 95 per cent of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and for the first time, Israel has recognised the Palestinian people on Palestinian soil."

But Dr. Majali criticised the present Israeli government's policies with regard to the peace process, noting that it is currently facing many problems.

He pointed out that European nations have realised the seriousness of the situation and are planning to put forth a new initiative to give it momentum.

Cabinet approves \$6.5m Japanese grant

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Saturday approved the exchange of documents for a \$6.5 million grant from Japan to purchase medical equipment for the University of Jordan Hospital.

The grant is part of an overall Japanese assistance programme for Jordan, according to a Cabinet statement released after a regular session.

The government has authorised Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf to sign the documents on behalf of the Jordanian government, the statement noted.

The Council authorised Jordan's ambassador to Malaysia to sign and exchange documents for the prevention of dual taxation between Malaysia and Jordan.

The Cabinet also approved amendments to the 1977 Montreal Protocol on the protection of the ozone layer.

It approved the formation of a delegation led by Minister of Culture and Youth Tala Hassan to participate in an international conference organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), due to be held in Stockholm, Sweden, on March 30.

On the sidelines of the Stockholm meeting, special committees will tackle a number of issues, focusing primarily on challenges facing international cultural cooperation and the role of the media in cultural policies. The Jordanian delegation will attend a conference by Arab ministers of culture and another by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

A delegation comprising Civil Aviation Authority representatives was formed to attend a special meeting by Arab air traffic controllers and personnel in charge of air transport, which is due to be held in Cairo on March 8.

The Cabinet also approved of a team from the Natural Resources Authority to take part in an annual conference on geology in Salt Lake City, U.S., in May.

Iraqi delegation expresses Baghdad's commitment to U.N. resolutions

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation representing the Iraqi National Assembly Saturday emphasised that Iraq is committed to the implementation of all U.N. Security Council resolutions and to the closure of the file on chemical and biological weapons so that it can resume its role in the Arab World.

Abdul Wahab Hiti, the head of the delegation, was speaking at a meeting with Lower House of Parliament Speaker

Sa'd Hayel Srour, to whom he expressed Iraq's appreciation of His Majesty King Hussein's efforts in ending the U.N.-Iraq crisis.

Mr. Srour noted that the King's efforts were in line with the ongoing drive to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and lift the sanctions on Iraq, which have been in place since 1990.

In an earlier meeting, Mr. Hiti and his delegation also voiced his country's appreci-

ation for Jordan's efforts to Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai.

The two sides reviewed a list of topics on the agenda of the upcoming Arab Parliamentary Union in Sana'a and Iraqi-Jordanian parliamentary relations.

The visiting delegation is currently on a tour of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to explain the Iraqi government's views and seek assistance in lifting the sanctions.

Also Saturday, Mr. Rifai

and Mr. Srour both received Sharif Rahmani, the Algerian minister in charge of the municipality of Algiers, and discussed prospects for cooperation between Amman and Algiers. The meetings were also attended by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi.

Mr. Rahmani thanked Jordan for the support it has given Algeria since the start of the revolution against colonial rule.

Information minister says ministry aiming to expand press freedoms

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Abdullah Ensour Saturday said the ministry is intent on raising the ceiling of freedom of the press and helping it to gain more credibility by reflecting Jordan's true image to the world.

In remarks during a meeting with Jordan Press Association President (JPA) Seif Sharif and members of the board, Dr. Ensour said the Ministry of Information seeks to strengthen cooperation with the JPA.

He stated that the ministry does not wish to censor or place any controls on the press as long as it exercises self-censorship with responsibility.

"Respect of the constitution is a national duty, because it guarantees freedom of the press. But this freedom hinges on safeguarding Jordan's basic principles and requires that the press refrain from abusing this trust by damaging national interests or harming relations with Arab and friendly states in the name of freedom and democracy," said the minister.

Dr. Ensour pledged to maintain constant contact with Jordanian journalists on the new association law, which is currently being studied by the Lower House of Parliament's Law Committee.

Referring to the Press and Publications Law, the minister said the amendments intro-

duced last May were motivated by the local press crossing a red line by publishing immoral articles and harming Jordan's image, which he said threatened the country's social and economic life.

Dr. Ensour said he will reinstate weekly meetings with the press corps and will invite ministers and members of Parliament, as well as senior officials, to participate.

Mr. Sharif and the minister reviewed a number of issues of concern to the JPA. He said His Majesty King Hussein had earlier granted the JPA a plot of land on which to build the association's club, but it was used to expand the grounds of the Martyr's Memorial near Al Hussein

Sports City. The JPA has prepared the blueprints for the club and is awaiting a new plot of land for the project, he added.

Mr. Sharif informed the minister that the JPA is also waiting for Al Ra'i and Al Dstour dailies to implement a court verdict granting the JPA a one per cent fee on their advertisements to help the association carry out its plans.

Referring to the prospect of accepting journalists working for the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation as JPA members, Mr. Sharif said they can be accepted as members provided that their corporation allocate funds from commercials to help the association absorb them.

Women's group begins campaign for Kingdom's needy

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Amman Women Organisation (AWO) has embarked on a campaign targeting women from the underprivileged areas of Jordan.

The AWO, in cooperation with the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Saturday gave out food and detergent to poor families in the Baqa'a refugee camp.

ECHO supervises and monitors relief programmes for refugees and vulnerable groups in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

For the past 20 years, the AWO has been working in the field of gender equality and social justice.

"The AWO extends its educational programmes and services to needy women living in underprivileged areas of the Kingdom," said AWO researcher Lamia Ra'i.

She told the Jordan Times that the AWO has been tackling the issue of gender equality and social justice through four channels: poverty eradication, education and culture, environmental education, and

democracy and human rights.

In 1997, the AWO initiated a democracy and human rights programme for grass root organisations. Under this, the constitutional right of female participation in the political process is highlighted through public awareness.

Due to the failure in last November's general elections of any of the 17 women candidates to win a seat in Parliament, AWO is conducting a study of the 1993 and 1997 elections "to find out what went wrong," said Ms. Ra'i.

In the field of the environment, Ms. Ra'i said the

AWO is in the process of forming a recycling coalition and solid waste separation programme with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and the Jordan Environment Society.

On Monday, a workshop detailing women's achievements and is held at AWO premises in Abdoun. This will be followed by a lecture on women's rights for women community leaders at Amman City Hall on March 16. The campaign will end on March 21 in Karak with a workshop on income-generating projects.

what's going on

FILM

* "Le Samourai" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh, on Monday, March 9 at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

CONCERT

* Classical Arabic music by Fares Hameed Yaseen and Raid Khorashaba Sham'oon from Iraq at Darat Al Fuman, Jabel Weibdeh, at 6:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "Western Research Studies on Islamic Modernisation (Tahdith)" (in Arabic) by Professor Stefan Wild (with comments by Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Doud and Dr. Ali Mahafza) at the University of Jordan at 5:00 p.m. (The same lecture will be delivered on Monday,

March 9, at Al Isra' University at 12 noon).

EXHIBITION

* Works by Sana' Kayyali at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until March 26. (Proceeds will go to Al Quds Al Sharif Defending Association).

* The Spanish Contemporary Graphic Art at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman (Tel. 610858), until March 20.

* Private collection of Mamdouh Bishara entitled "A Vision, An Identity" at Darat Al Fuman, Jabel Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 643251). Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Opposition asks for dismissal of government over Ma'an riots

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The coalition of opposition parties yesterday demanded the dismissal of the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, which it held responsible for the killing of one and the wounding of dozens in the Feb. 20-21 Ma'an riots.

The 13 parties, headed by the Islamic Action Front (IAF), also called for the immediate release of all persons arrested following the disturbance and for "a halt to all persecution and brutality against the people of Ma'an."

"We demand that all those responsible for this attack on the people be punished, and compensation be paid for all damages that resulted from the government's aggression against the citizens," they said in a three-page statement.

The statement also asked that Feb. 20 be declared a national holiday, in commemoration of "the brave stand taken by the people of Ma'an... who stood up for legitimate freedoms and rights, sharing the pains of the nation."

Speaking to a press conference yesterday, opposition leaders announced the results of their investigation of the Ma'an riots.

They said eyewitnesses agreed that "the demonstration started peacefully, after Friday prayers, but within a few minutes, the security forces, or the so-called riot police, armed with modern equipment and vehicles, brutally attacked the people using all means, beating, shooting and turning dogs loose on them."

They said they also collected the testimony of some media crews, "who were able to witness a few incidents in those dark days of our history."

Three days after the riots, His Majesty King Hussein received reports indicating that the security forces were not responsible for the death of Mohammad Katib, the 22-year-old killed in the riots.

"When I enquired about the incident in Ma'an, it was clear that the security forces did not open fire, but were themselves fired upon. The victim was hit in the back, which means that one of the people who were on the scene shot him," King Hussein said.

The King defended the role of the security forces in quelling the unrest, saying that "they exercised restraint" and were the targets of a "campaign."

"I believe there was a campaign against the security forces, the government, the minister of interior, and the Public Security Department's director general," the King stated.

claimed that the unrest was "planned in advance" by the security forces "to punish the city of Ma'an."

"Security preparations had already been made a few miles away from the town and the military had been on the alert long before that sad Friday. This proves that the punishment of Ma'an was already planned, as a message from the government to all Jordanians throughout the country that it intended to obey American orders and prevent all demonstrations of support towards Iraq," the statement said.

In the wake of the then-escalating U.N.-Iraq stand-off over weapons inspections, the government in mid-February issued a ban on all public rallies.

The ban was fiercely criticised by the opposition as un-democratic. A one-week curfew was imposed on Ma'an after the riots and the police

carried out a house-to-house search, during which they confiscated some 500 illegal weapons and quantities of explosives, the prime minister announced yesterday.

"The government is continuing its misleading propaganda through the official media. Everybody knows that owning weapons is a deeply-rooted custom in our society, and there are hardly households without a weapon in any town," the opposition replied.

Government-opposition relations started deteriorating after the appointment of Dr. Majali last March. The situation escalated with the opposition's decision to boycott last November's general elections in protest against the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and what they termed as "a steady erosion of parliamentary authority under successive governments."

Yugoslav army reinforces Albanian border

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — The Yugoslav army has sent reinforcements to the border with Albania in the wake of unrest in Kosovo province, the independent daily Koha Ditore reported Saturday.

"Large numbers of troops were seen moving towards the border in the Djakovica region, near Kosovo's border with Albania, the daily said.

Ethnic Albanians make up some 90 per cent of the population of the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Koha Ditore said two agricultural complexes in the region were being renovated, "probably to house army personnel."

Friday, the Albanian general staff announced in Tirana that a team of experts had been sent to the Kosovo border to monitor developments.

It also announced plans in the near future for military exercises in northeastern Albania, near the Kosovo frontier.

Clashes between Serbian security forces and Albanian demonstrators in Kosovo have left at least 42 dead in the past week, Albanian sources put the figure at 75 dead.

The Serbian interior ministry said that "more than 20 terrorists" had been killed in the crackdown, while 16 Albanians were killed in the weekend violence.

It added that six policemen were killed and seven injured.

Late Friday, Belgrade said the core of "terrorist bands and Albanian separatists has been wiped out," including their "chief," Adem Jashari, in the towns of Prekaz and Srbica, in the region of Drenica.

Adem Meta, the ethnic Albanian secretary for human rights in Srbica, said automatic arms fire and an explosion were heard just before dawn Saturday from the villages of Llausha and Prekaz.

He said Serbian police had started to withdraw from an ammunition depot between Srbica and Prekaz which had been used to shell both places.

Three tanks, three trucks and two cars left the area, heading north, Meta said, adding that seven houses in Prekaz had been destroyed by the shelling.

Albanian sources said as many as 1,000 refugees from the fighting in

Drenica had arrived late Friday in Kosovska Mitrovica, 30 kilometres north of the capital Pristina.

The assault by Serbian security forces in Kosovo caused panic in Pristina, where normally crowded main streets have been almost deserted since the fighting began.

The conflict is expected to top the agenda during U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's current European tour, and was the main topic during her talks Saturday with Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini.

Meanwhile, Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz left Ankara Saturday for a one-day visit to Bulgaria to discuss the situation in Kosovo.

Friday, Mr. Yilmaz spoke by telephone with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, and voiced Turkey's concern that "escalating tensions in Kosovo could have wider repercussions on the whole of the Balkans."

Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem was expected to arrive in Belgrade later Saturday for a meeting with Mr. Milosevic, Turkish embassy officials

told AFP.

It was the first time Turkey, which has historical links with Kosovo, has sought to assume an active role in resolving the conflict.

The Albanian army chief of staff Friday dispatched a team of experts to Albania's border with Kosovo, with orders to "follow the development of the situation," the defence ministry said.

It also emerged that the U.N. Security Council could discuss the unrest in Kosovo following a ministerial meeting of the Contact Group in London Monday.

The international Contact Group on former Yugoslavia comprises Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States.

Belgrade's ally Russia, meanwhile, hit out at "unacceptable" Western calls for direct intervention in the crisis, condemning "terrorist acts carried out by the so-called liberation army of Kosovo," a reference to separatist guerrillas among Kosovo's Albanian population.

Albright takes tough line on Kosovo crisis

ROME (R) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Saturday the United States was "not going to stand by and watch" Serbian authorities create bloodshed in Kosovo and did not rule any options out to end the violence.

In a toughly worded warning at a news conference, Ms. Albright held Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic responsible for the crisis in Kosovo, where dozens of ethnic Albanians have been reported killed in recent clashes with Serbian authorities.

She said she had not discussed armed intervention in Kosovo in talks with Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, but would press U.S. allies to follow Washington in imposing sanctions on rump Yugoslavia at a big-power meeting Monday.

The state department said last Friday it was withdrawing sanctions relief it had earlier promised Belgrade. Foreign ministers or deputies from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia will join Ms. Albright at Monday's meeting in London.

Ms. Albright met Mr. Dini

as part of a six-day tour of Europe and Canada. She later held a half-hour meeting at the Vatican with Pope John Paul for talks on Cuba and Iraq.

Ms. Albright said Mr. Milosevic had spurned U.S. incentives for good behaviour in former Yugoslavia. "Unfortunately, the one thing he truly understands is decisive and firm action on the part of the international community," she said.

"We are not going to tolerate any return to the politics of divide and rule anywhere in the former Yugoslavia. We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia."

Ms. Albright told a questioner later that she and Mr. Dini "did not discuss armed intervention" in Kosovo, a province of Serbia, but she added: "We do not rule anything out."

"We believe that Milosevic is the one that bears responsibility for this. We believe that it is important that there be a peaceful pursuit of the legitimate political rights of the people of Kosovo," she added.

Ms. Albright and Mr. Dini told reporters they also discussed Iran, Iraq, and prospects for reviving the stalled Middle East peace process.

Mr. Dini, who visited Iran earlier this week, said he and Ms. Albright believed the policies of Iran's recently appointed moderate President Mohammad Khatami "deserve encouragement but at the same time we need to understand that deeds must follow."

Ms. Albright cautioned that in seeking to promote change in Iran, "declaring success prematurely is the surest way to delay success indefinitely."

The United States, which accuses Tehran of pursuing weapons of mass destruction, threatening its neighbours and sabotaging Middle East peace, Friday persuaded Ukraine to abandon a nuclear cooperation deal with Iran.

Washington until recently condemned the European Union policy of "critical dialogue" with Tehran, but Ms. Albright Saturday reaffirmed the latest line that the best way to overcome U.S.-Iranian differences was "direct dialogue."

She said the United States still "might have some difference (with Europe) in pacing and tactics" on Iran.

On Iraq, Mrs. Albright said that despite an agreement negotiated last month by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to avert U.S. air strikes in a dispute over arms inspections, "my message today was that this is not over."

She said that if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein failed to meet his commitment to give U.N. inspectors full access, "he must understand that no one is prepared to give peace an unlimited number of chances."

Ms. Albright said she planned "enhanced consultations" with the European Union on the Middle East peace process, but gave no suggestion that she was prepared to relinquish Washington's central mediating role.

She did not comment on a remark by Mr. Dini that the United States was preparing a "new initiative" to revive talks between Israel and the Palestinians, although the White House said earlier this week it was looking at "new thinking."

Activist seeking to protest outside NPC arrested

BEIJING (AFP) — A dissident from Shenzhen who travelled to Beijing to demonstrate for human rights during the National People's Congress has been arrested by police, a human rights group said Saturday.

Liao Xike was taken away in a police truck Friday after he arrived in Tiananmen Square and tried to set up a sign and shout slogans urging greater respect for human rights, the Information Centre of Human Rights at Democratic Movement in China said in a statement faxed here.

He has not been heard from since he was taken away, according to his wife and mother, the Hong Kong-based group's director Frank Lu told AFP on the phone.

Police in Shenzhen also detained Mr. Liao's mother and questioned her about his activities, as well as interrogating his wife over the phone, he said, adding that police in the southern boomtown are now watching Mr. Liao's home.

"He wrote a declaration saying he wanted to set up an opposition party. He was in Beijing in Tiananmen Square yesterday and wanted to protest and demon-

strate.

Mr. Liao tried to set up a sign saying "the Communist party must give us back our human rights" when police took him away in a car, Mr. Lu said.

The rights group statement said Mr. Liao tried to form an opposition party which would promote anti-corruption and call for the release of all political prisoners.

Mr. Liao runs a private karaoke business in Shenzhen. He came to Tiananmen Square to protest near the NPC, which is meeting nearby in the Great Hall of the People from March 5 to 19, according to the rights group.

Authorities have cracked down on dissident activity lately, with at least six other activists arrested in the run-up to the NPC, although at least two have since been released.

The approach of the annual session of the NPC provoked a rash of open letters and petitions from dissidents demanding political reforms.

This year's meeting is particularly sensitive, as it will install a new team of state leaders, including a new premier, parliamentary chief and vice president.

Supplies, weather relieve Pakistan flood victims

QUETTA, Pakistan (AFP) — Relief work gathered pace in the flood-hit region in southwestern Pakistan Saturday as more supplies poured in for thousands of homeless villagers amid clear weather, officials said.

Army troops and civilian teams were working round-the-clock to mitigate the sufferings of victims in Turbat region, where more than 200 bodies have so far been recovered following last Tuesday's heavy floods, they said.

Authorities said it would take time to make a final assessment of human and material losses in the disaster in which around 1,500 people were feared dead or missing.

Helicopters and a C-130 aircraft ferried relief goods, including food and tents for the homeless, the officials said.

"We urgently need greater supply of tents,"

an official said, adding the Baluchistan province had asked for 10,000 of them from the federal government.

He said arrangements were in hand to build up sufficient stores of medicines to cope with any outbreak of malaria and other diseases in the scores of villages devastated by the flood waters.

Meanwhile, the Baluchistan government exempted the flood-affected people from provincial taxes and agricultural levies for a year, officials said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who toured the region Thursday, announced a grant of 50 million rupees (more than \$1 million) for relief work.

In addition to the air-lift, relief material has also been sent by ship from southern Arabian Sea port of Karachi for the flood-stricken coastal region in Baluchistan.



Atal Behari Vajpayee (right), prime ministerial candidate of India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), gives a victory sign after being elected parliamentary party leader in New Delhi. Also seen in the picture is the BJP's president, Lal Krishna Advani (Reuters photo)

India's Hindu nationalist PM-in-waiting denies agenda of hate

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Hindu nationalist leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, expected to become prime minister, Saturday denied accusations that his government would threaten India's secular traditions with "an agenda ... of hate."

Mr. Vajpayee, chosen unanimously Saturday as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party)'s prime ministerial candidate, said: "Secularism is in our blood."

The right-wing BJP, seeking to lead a nationalist alliance to power following hung elections, said it expected to be called by India's president to form a government before March 15.

Meanwhile, leaders of rival parties who accuse the nationalists of sectarianism, conceded their hopes of launching an anti-BJP coalition were receding after a split emerged among their ranks.

Mr. Vajpayee, 71, told about 200 party leaders and newly-elected members of parliament: "Our agenda is not one of hate. Our agenda is the nation's agenda."

BJP President Lal Krishna Advani added: "It is a historic day."

"We are confident Vajpayee will be the prime minister of India after a few days."

The BJP and its dozen allies emerged as the largest parliamentary bloc following polling last month, win-

ning 250 of 545 seats in a badly-fragmented house. The BJP claimed 178 seats on its own.

If the bloc comes to power, it will in effect be India's first Hindu nationalist administration. The BJP tried to form a government in 1996 but, with no chance of a majority, lasted just 13 days.

The other two main groups in the new parliament, the Congress (166 seats) and the United Front (95), have been considering a partnership to keep the BJP out of power, as they did two years ago.

But it emerged Saturday that one member of the Front, a loose alliance of centre, left-wing and regional parties, had dropped its opposition to the BJP, virtually killing off the challenge.

India, plagued by political instability, is electing its fifth government within two years. No single party has won a majority since 1984. The new parliament contains 38 parties, the highest figure ever.

The BJP, which went into the elections championing "one nation, one people, one culture", was Saturday still trying to win the support of minor parties and independents to reach the 273-seat majority mark.

Mr. Vajpayee, dressed in a traditional Indian suit and speaking in Hindi, assured potential allies he would try to build a consensus, adding: "We shall preserve

the diversity in languages, culture and lifestyle which forms our nation's unity."

The former foreign minister, touted as a "moderate," said: "There shall never be any discrimination on the basis of religion."

Congress and United Front say the nationalists would discriminate against minorities, including 125 million Muslims, who make up about 13 per cent of India's 960 million population.

The candidacy of Mr. Vajpayee, one of India's best parliamentarians, as head of the BJP's parliamentary wing, was seconded by Sikander Bakht, the BJP's only Muslim leader.

The challenge to the nationalists began dissolving Friday when a party within the United Front said its 12 members of parliament would not oppose a BJP-led government.

However, the Congress, which had been hoping to team up with the Front to stop the BJP coming to power, remained defiant.

"We have hopes," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil told AFP. "You will see some developments in the next two or three days."

The Congress, in decline after ruling India for 45 of 50 years, supported a United Front minority coalition after the 1996 hung polls to keep out the nationalists.

Their uneasy co-habitation, however, collapsed after 18 months.

German Greens have full day of work on party platform

MAGDEBURG, Germany (AFP) — The German Greens attacked the meat of their party platform Saturday, discussing what they call ecologically oriented tax reform at their party congress in the eastern town of Magdeburg.

Greens party leader Joschka Fischer, who is being mentioned as a possible foreign minister if the left wing German general elections next September, was to speak to the 750 delegates assembled in the cavernous Boordelandhalle on economic matters during the day.

The Greens are drawing up an election platform for the September election.

The practical "realists" and more doctrinaire "fundis" within the radical environmentalist party are closing ranks behind a moderate presentation of their views in order to make themselves palatable as a possible coalition partner in government with Germany's main opposition party, the Social Democrats (SPD).

Uwe Hildebrand of the Young Alternative Union, a youth group within the Greens, told AFP there was unanimity in the party about joining the political mainstream.

"It is a chance to have an ecologically oriented energy policy in the government," he said, adding that he did not think the ideals of the rank-and-file would be betrayed.

A poll published in Bonn Friday said a leftist SPD-Greens alliance would easily win September's general elections against conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl with 50 per cent of the vote.

The heart of the Greens so-called "Oekosteuern", or ecological tax, is imposing stiff taxes on gasoline and companies that pollute in order to raise funds to improve public transportation, save jobs in infrastructure industries such as steel and railroad construction and stimulate development of less gas-consuming cars.

But the Greens are not expected to insist, as they have in the past, that gasoline prices be pushed by taxes from their current level of about 1.7 marks (about \$1) a litre to five marks (about \$3) a litre.

Indeed, the Greens' tactics on Oekosteuern should mirror their approach to their platform in general — enunciate principles but be flexible on implementation.

Thus the Greens are set to modify their demand that atomic energy be abandoned as a power resource to saying that it must be abandoned over the long term.

They already decided Friday to continue backing Germany military involvement in peace-keeping in Bosnia as long as this did not become "peace-enforcing" action.

They are not expected to discuss at all some of the party's more far-fetched proposals, such as calling for the disbanding of the German army, the Bundeswehr, and of NATO.

The Greens had opened their party congress Friday creating a commission to negotiate a possible power-sharing arrangement with the SPD.

The proposal to form the commission came from Greens spokesman Joergen Trittin. The 12-member body would form if the two leftist parties had a majority to rule together after Sept. 27 general elections. It would include the Greens party leaders, parliament whips and other members from the party leadership.

The commission would "rapidly" negotiate a "coalition contract" to be concluded by Oct. 18 to reach a decision on a new chancellor as the new parliament is to sit no later than 30 days after the Sept. 27 vote, according to the motion passed by acclamation.

If Germany "is to have a new beginning after 16 years of (Chancellor Helmut) Mr. Kohl, it can only happen with the Bündnis 90/Alliance," Mr. Trittin said, using the full name for the Greens.

Britain's royals mull sweeping protocol changes

LONDON (R) — Britain's royal family is expected to cut back on pomp and ceremony, limiting the number of HRH titles and making clear that the traditional curtsy and bow are optional rather than compulsory.

In the latest of a series of sweeping reforms under discussion to counter accusations that it is out of touch and wasteful, the royal family is also considering restricting the use of royal cars, planes and helicopters at taxpayer's expense.

The reforms, reported in the Sun newspaper Saturday, have been discussed by Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles and other immediate members of the family after the findings of an in-depth opinion poll which is said to have provided grim reading.

Buckingham Palace declined to confirm or deny the Sun story. But a spokeswoman said a number of reforms had been discussed by senior members of the royal family although nothing had yet been confirmed.

The reported changes reflect the so-called "Diana effect" which has spurred the royals to modernise and bow to public opinion after being pilloried for appearing aloof

to the tide of grief that swept the nation over Diana's death.

Buckingham Palace said Queen Elizabeth has written a note clarifying that ordinary people are no longer obliged to drop into a curtsy or bow before members of the royal family.

The Sun said she was considering in future limiting the prestigious his or Her Royal Highness (HRH) title to the monarch, his or her children and the children of the heir to the throne.

If the change was introduced immediately, it would mean nine royals being stripped of the title — including the two daughters of Prince Andrew and his ex-wife Fergie, the duchess of York.

The Sun said the queen was also considering drastically reducing the 35 million pound (\$57 million) bill for police protection of the royal family and restricting the use of royal cars and helicopters.

The reforms have come from the "way ahead group" formed by the queen, heir to the throne Prince Charles and other senior aides and family members.

It was set up in 1992 — the queen's "anus horribilis" —

when Prince Charles and Diana's marriage collapsed in scandal and a row broke out over initial suggestions that the public should pay to restore Windsor Castle after a major fire.

Diana's unexpected death last August accelerated the pressure for change. Buckingham Palace commissioned an opinion poll that gave the queen high marks for leadership but branded the royal family overall as lacking in compassion, extravagant and bound by protocol.

Friday Buckingham Palace cited Diana's death as the reason behind a decision to fly the union flag over the palace 24 hours a day.

Until now the royal standard flag was flown but only when the monarch was in residence, leading to an outcry when the Buckingham Palace flagpole remained empty for days following Diana's death.

Only last week the queen paved the way for changes in the constitution which would give girls equal rights to the throne. Under present laws dating back centuries precedence is given to the sons of the monarch, even if they have older sisters.

China refuses to be dragged in Hong Kong's row over press freedom

BEIJING (AFP) — China will not be dragged into the row over press freedom in Hong Kong following attacks on the government broadcasting network by pro-China representatives, officials said Saturday.

Government officials refused to comment on the row over press freedom in Hong Kong, which resurfaced when Xu Simin, Hong Kong's delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), accused Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) of being too critical of the Beijing and Hong Kong governments.

Mr. Xu, 86, described RTHK as a "remnant of British rule" and accused it of being "against the SAR" (Special Administrative Region) government and (Chief Secretary) Tung Chee-hwa under the pretext of editorial independence.

"We don't know about the matter," said a spokesman for the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Department.

Mr. Xu's criticism has sparked concerns in Hong Kong, with journalists' groups and politicians expressing fears of curbs on press freedom.

Mr. Tung's deputy, Anson Chan, had earlier criticised Mr. Xu for attacking RTHK, saying such criticism could give a "very wrong impression that there is an attempt to invite the central government to interfere in the affairs of the SAR."

She said Hong Kong representatives to the CPPCC and National People's Congress (NPC) "have a particular responsibility to observe scrupulously the concept of one country, two systems and Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong."

However, on his return from Beijing where he was observing the opening of the NPC, Mr. Tung said: "These are personal views. We respect the right of individuals to express personal views, but they do not represent the views of the central government."

He added that "freedom of speech and information is something we treasure and regard very much. Nobody, I repeat, nobody should doubt the government's determination in this respect."

"RTHK is a Hong Kong issue. We will deal with RTHK, if there's any need in Hong Kong. Of course, RTHK has editorial independence," he said.

In response to Mr. Xu's charges, RTHK issued a statement defending its work.

"As a public-funded body, our prime responsibility is to service the public. Reporting and analysing government policy is one of our important functions," RTHK said.

"At the same time, we provide sufficient time for the public to air their views. We hope Mr. Xu can spend more time listening and watching our programmes," it added.



Picture dated Nov. 1996 shows Afghan women, wearing Taliban-imposed burqas, waiting during a winter relief distribution in Kabul (AFP photo)

Hostage-takers agree to wait for Islamic lawyer

DAVAO, Philippines (AFP) — A group of prisoners who are holding five women hostage in a southern Philippine penal colony agreed Saturday to drop their demand for a getaway vehicle and to instead wait for a meeting with an Islamic lawyer.

Dario Mahumot, leader of the hostage-takers said, in an interview aired over local radio station DXDC, that they would not leave the Davao penal colony but would wait for the lawyer dispatched by a Muslim insurgent group.

The eight prisoners, seven of whom claim to be members of the Muslim insurgent Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), took five civilian women prison employees hostage Thursday using improvised weapons made out of iron bars and kitchen utensils.

The prisoners, most of them serving time for common-law crimes including robbery and murder, have threatened to kill their hostages one by one and have kept police at a standstill for two days, initially demanding a vehicle.

They demanded a helicopter to fly them to an MILF camp but after a dialogue with MILF military commander Mohammad Murad, they agreed to wait instead for a meeting with the lawyer who is versed in Islamic law.

It was not clear what the Islamic lawyer was supposed to do in meeting the prisoners. The hostage-takers had also asked to be transferred to an MILF camp but this was turned down.

Jesus Dureza, an aide of Philippine President Fidel Ramos, who was dispatched to negotiate with the prisoners said "I don't think this request (for a transfer) is possible but nonetheless, I am happy that they are now talking down their position."

Mr. Murad said the request for a transfer was also unlikely to be granted adding that they still had to confirm if these prisoners really were members of the MILF.

Mr. Dureza had previously met with the MILF to discuss the hostage-taking incident.

The MILF, founded in 1978 and which has an estimated 10,000 guerrillas, is holding peace talks with the government which is attempting to negotiate a political settlement with the last major insurgency in Mindanao, the southern region that is home to the country's Islamic minority.

Officials also said that relatives of the five hostages were able to meet with them in the reception area where they are being held to hand over provisions.

The five women reportedly

had no reports of mistreatment by the hostage-takers but were afraid the police would rush the place, prompting the hostage-takers to pull the pin on five grenades they had obtained.

Mr. Dureza said he had got the Mr. Ramos government to act immediately on one of the prisoners' demands — the replacement of prison Superintendent Jose Poblacion and for prison guards to pull back.

However, he ruled out giving them a getaway vehicle.

"We have to act fast in critical situations like this," he said earlier, recalling a similar incident in 1989 when a group of prisoners took an Australian missionary hostage, gang-raped and then murdered her.

The hostage-takers then were later shot dead after police launched an assault. "We will not allow this thing to happen again," he added.

Mr. Dureza said he "warned them not to harm the hostages," otherwise all prior agreements would be called off.

He said he had been informed that "the night passed without anything major happening."

Prison officials have said the hostage-takers had also made other demands including the building of a mosque in the prison.

Taleban slam anti-Islamic women's day campaign

KABUL (AFP) — A campaign marking International Women's Day with a dedication to Afghan women living under the purist Muslim Taleban was Saturday slammed by the militia as "anti-Islamic."

A senior Taleban official launched a vitriolic personal attack on European Commissioner Emma Bonino who has been spearheading the campaign since her controversial visit to Kabul last year.

"Ms. Bonino is not out to reassure Afghan women or assert their rights, but she is out to insult Islamic traditions and rituals," asserted Abdul Rahman Hotaki, the Taleban's deputy information minister.

Referring to her visit to Afghanistan in September last year, when she and her delegation of aides and journalists were arrested for filming women, Mr. Hotaki said the outspoken commissioner is merely seeking personal political gain.

Ms. Bonino, who serves as commissioner for humanitarian aid, announced the campaign following her release from

more than three hours in Taleban detention, when she also dubbed the militia's rule as a "reign of terror."

"She came to Afghanistan and demonstrated her desire for adventurism and confrontation, and the issue of

women is a guise for her to follow her own political ambitions," Mr. Hotaki said.

The women's day campaign, which is being marked in Europe with press briefings, exhibitions and protests over the Taleban's banning of women from work and education, would be seen as an attack on Islam, he said.

"She is portraying the chadri or burqa as a symbol of barbarism; this is an anti-Islamic campaign which is an insult not only to Afghans but to Muslims all over the world," Mr. Hotaki said.

The Taleban militia, who control around two-thirds of Afghanistan including the once liberal capital Kabul, say they have implemented the world's purest Islamic state, and their strict policies include the banning of women from work and education.

A strict dress code is also enforced under which women have to wear the burqa, a tent-like flowing garment through which women can see the outside world through a hexagonal patch of gauze over the eyes.

U.K. minister slams gender apartheid by Taleban

LONDON (R) — British Minister Clare Short urged the world community to mark Sunday's International Women's Day by making a stand against "gender apartheid" in Afghanistan.

"Discrimination against women is human rights abuse on a global scale, and a major hindrance to the elimination of poverty," said Ms. Short, secretary of State for International Development.

"It is important that women worldwide seize the opportunity of international women's day to draw attention to the plight of women in Afghanistan, who are excluded from society by law and subjected to discrimination which is nothing short of gender apartheid," she said in a statement to mark Women's Day on March 8.

Since the Taleban seized power in Afghanistan in 1996 they stripped women of many of their rights. In a bid to create what they consider the purest Islamic state on earth they have banned women from going to work, closed girls' schools and imposed strict segregation.

Ms. Short, an outspoken left-winger in the Britain's Labour government, also announced a £7.5 million (\$12.3 million) humanitarian aid package for Afghanistan.

She said she was tripling British contributions to UNIFEM — the United Nations development fund for women — to over £600,000 to help further its work in promoting women's human rights.

Part of the funding will support a joint UNIFEM/United Nations Development Programme project in Tajikistan to support women's roles in peace building after five years of civil war.

Warrants out for tourists who lied about mugging

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Five female tourists who falsely claimed they were mugged in February have been charged with perjury and would be arrested if they returned to South Africa, police said.

They said arrest warrants had been issued for the four New Zealanders and one Australian who claimed they were mugged at knife-point in an upmarket Johannesburg suburb, reported the Star newspaper Saturday.

The visitors said their backpacks and goods worth 30,000 rands (\$6,100) were stolen but later admitted to making up the story to claim insurance.

Russia offers mediation between Pakistan and India over Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Russia has offered to mediate between Pakistan and India to help resolve their festering Kashmir dispute that has triggered two wars in the past, a foreign office spokesman said here Saturday.

"We are very happy" with the offer, which was conveyed by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin during his visit here earlier this week, the spokesman told reporters.

The spokesman did not say how the Russian offer would be seen by India, which has previously rejected similar suggestions by the United States, Britain and other countries, ruling out any third party involvement.

He said Moscow's proposal as well as earlier such moves by other countries

confirmed that they considered Kashmir a disputed territory and recognised the "importance" of solving it for peace and stability in South Asia.

Pakistan and India resumed a dialogue last year on improving long-strained bilateral relations but the talks bogged down after three rounds at the foreign secretary-level in differences over Kashmir.

The Himalayan region is divided between Pakistan and India and is claimed by both. New Delhi holds the southern two-thirds and Islamabad the rest of the disputed region.

The spokesman said Pakistan wanted to build friendly and good neighbourly relations with India by settling all issues underlying mutual tension.

"We look forward to reciprocity by whichever government takes office in India," following the just-concluded polls in that country, he said.

The spokesman said the visit of the Russian deputy foreign minister, who had wide-ranging talks with the government here, reflected "growing contacts" between Islamabad and Moscow to improve bilateral ties.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan visited Moscow last year and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also plans a trip to Russia.

The spokesman said preparations were under way for Mr. Sharif's visit but no dates had been fixed as yet. Meanwhile a high-level visit to Pakistan from Russia is expected in the middle of the current year, he added.

Global March against Child Labour arrives in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — The Global March against Child Labour arrived in Argentina and headed straight for the spot in front of Parliament where schoolteachers have camped out in a rotating fast for almost a year to protest child exploitation.

As supporters chanted against child labour, Argentine teachers late Friday welcomed the marchers, who have already carried their protest to Brazil and Uruguay.

Authorities tolerate some 500,000 children working in those three countries, the group said.

The Global March representatives, led by Brazilian Caio Magri, were met by the head of the teachers' union, Marta Maffei, and the woman leading the fast, Sister Martha Pelloni.

"It is intolerable that children younger than 14 work anywhere in the world," Mr. Magri told reporters. Until that age the child's apriority should be to obtain a basic education, he said.

Two actors read a text of the International Rights of Children, a document that Argentina has included in its constitution.

The Global March will travel throughout Argentina until March 13, when it will move into Chile at the site of Christ the Redeemer, a massive statue that straddles the border between the two countries high in the Andes.

Opposition against child labour began in India. The first march was organised

in 1990, and went from Calcutta to Nepal. The non-governmental

Global March groups some 600 organisations from 85 different countries.

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Critical juncture

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's call for a united Arab stand on Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict reflects the critical situation that the region has reached. Foremost on the King's mind, during a visit to the Arab Gulf region that ended yesterday, were the stalled Middle East peace process and the Iraqi crisis, which keeps erupting from time to time and reaches the brink. The King has already made known his initiative on the Iraqi situation by proposing a direct U.S.-Iraqi dialogue as the only viable way out of the on and off standoff between Baghdad and Washington. No doubt the King discussed his thoughts on the issue in Abu Dhabi and Muscat and heard the views of Sheikh Zayed and Sultan Qaboos.

On the Iraqi situation, there is no question that the ideas of the leaders of the Arab Gulf region are very important, since the restoration of relations between Baghdad and its Arab neighbours offers the only hope for lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq. Most Arab capitals in the Gulf have already conditioned the restoration of relations with Baghdad on Iraq's honest fulfillment of its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, something that Iraq seems intent on doing. Washington would of course respond positively to a collective Arab position since its interests are better served by content partners. The Gulf states can certainly influence such a collective Arab stand. It is no secret that Muscat and Abu Dhabi have been very moderate in their approach towards the Iraqi question since the end of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The United Arab Emirates has openly called for the ending of the suffering of the Iraqi people and has sent humanitarian aid to the country. In contrast to 1990-91, no Arab Gulf capital, with the exception of Kuwait, has accepted the use of its territory to launch a military strike against Iraq. That in itself was a significant shift that made the diplomatic option to defuse the crisis possible.

Armed with a common wish by the Arab World to end the suffering of the Iraqi people, King Hussein will surely pursue his call for a direct contact between Washington and Baghdad during his upcoming talks with President Bill Clinton. A solution to the Iraq question could very well trigger a breakthrough in the faltering peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. That is why forging a common Arab stand on Iraq on the eve of the King's visit to Washington is very important.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Aswaq's Rashid Hassan tackled the question of Israel experimenting with dangerous drugs on Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails in light of a declaration by Arab health ministers about this issue at the end of their meeting in Damascus last week. This is not the first time an alarm was sounded, nor will it be the last as long as the Arabs suffice themselves with statements and complaints, said the writer. He said the Arab governments have repeatedly drawn the attention of world organisations including the World Health Organisation, human rights groups and many others to the crimes being committed by Israel against the Palestinians but no measure was taken to put an end to such atrocity. The writer said he recalled that the Israelis had added dangerous substances to the tanker trucks supplying water to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1983 with the purpose of stemming the local residents' power to reproduce, but the measure proved a failure. Hassan said the U.N. has compiled a dossier of 175 resolutions denouncing Israel's crimes against humanity in the territories under its occupation but nothing was done to deter its governments' criminal actions. The writer said that Israel's crimes are bound to continue as long as nothing and no one is ready and determined to put an end to such inhuman acts.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan Saturday said Israel's declaration of its intention to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon is politically motivated to achieve several objectives. Of course the Israelis are unanimous about the question of withdrawal because their forces' presence in the occupied strip of southern Lebanon has caused the death of many troops at the hands of the Lebanese resistance. But, Adwan said, Israel also hopes that by withdrawing from southern Lebanon it will show the world that it is determined to live in peace with its neighbours and at the same time it aims to freeze the question of withdrawing from the Syrian Golan Heights and indefinitely postpone the redeployment of its forces in the Palestinian territories as stipulated in the Oslo accord. The writer said, although one is tempted to welcome this withdrawal from southern Lebanon, it should be stressed that such a move can bring no lasting peace as long as the other parts of the Arab lands are still under occupation. The writer said the Arabs must insist that Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon should be part of an overall plan to evacuate all the other parts of the Palestinian and Syrian territories.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordan succeeds in managing debt

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

UNTIL JORDAN reached the point of economic crisis in 1988/1989, only one voice was heard warning against the increasing danger of growing external indebtedness. For six years those warnings went in vain — no one in officialdom listened. On the contrary, some officials labelled warnings against extensive debt as shaking the confidence in the national economy.

After the crisis erupted, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was called to the rescue, warnings against debt were no longer brushed off as inconsequential. Jordanian officials were supposed to have learnt the lesson the hard way based on the actual bitter experience. But what we got were many activists unnecessarily warning against debt when it was already too late to do much about it.

Still, excessive external borrowing places a restriction on the country's independence and sovereignty, and creates a heavy burden on the economy and the coming generations. Debt should not be allowed to resume growth under the temptation of easy money and irresponsible attitudes by governments that it makes sense, politically, to borrow funds and spend more as long as repayment of instalments and interest will come due in

the future under other governments.

Having said that, we should not ignore facts and invent risks that don't exist. It is not true for example that Jordan is now heading towards another debt crisis as some commentators claimed in order to look wise. The facts are different. Indebtedness is now under control and in decline in absolute figures as well as in relative terms.

In 1991, Jordan's foreign indebtedness stood at around \$8.5 billion. It was reduced over seven years to stand currently at \$6.5 billion. The size of debt was reduced by \$2 billion over the years of the economic adjustment programme sponsored by the IMF. However, debt should not be measured only in billions of dollars. It is more meaningful from an economic standpoint to measure indebtedness of any country as a ratio of the gross domestic product (GDP). In this respect, Jordan's indebtedness used to be in the order of 200 per cent of GDP in 1991. It has now declined to 84 per cent because the economy grew at around 75 per cent over the period. This is an important and undeniable achievement. Debt reduction did not come about by coincidence, it was the result of proper measures

taken by the government, and serious sacrifices tolerated by the population in the form of lower standards of living.

On the other hand, indebtedness in an economic sense should take into account the balances of foreign exchange held by the country, which could be seen as negative debt. When Jordan's indebtedness to the outside world peaked at 1991, the official reserves of the country in foreign exchange were minimal. Now the net position of the banking system is in credit to the extent of \$3.6 billion including private deposits of residents in the Jordanian banking systems and the Iraqi outstanding debt, but excluding private deposits abroad. This means that net indebtedness of Jordan has gone down to around \$3 billion or 35 per cent of GDP.

The last thing that we have in mind is to put our officials at ease and make them more aggressive in dealing with debt and in borrowing more fresh money. By stating the facts and giving credit where it is due, one enables observers to make educated judgements when it comes to the level and trend of Jordan's external debt and the extent of its qualifications to receive foreign investments.

'A self-evident truth to heal the Holy Land'

By John V. Whitbeck

FRENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac's public acknowledgement in 1995 that his country bears heavy responsibility for the deportation of French Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II was greeted with universal applause. Since the truth of his acknowledgement was so self-evident, one wonders in retrospect why it was so difficult and why it took so long.

With the Middle East "peace process" which began in Madrid and accelerated in Oslo having reached a definitive dead end, a similar statement of self-evident truth could produce immense psychological and practical benefits, restoring hopes for a decent future and a life worth living for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Richard Goldstone, the eminent South African jurist who served as the first chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, stated in connection with the human rights atrocities with which he had to deal that "the victimised group must be dehumanised or demonised. Once this is done, it frees ordinary people from the moral restraints that would normally inhibit them from doing such terrible things."

His principle is one of universal and timeless validity and is applicable to most of the settler-colonial transformations of recent centuries. For the past few years, the European-descended majorities in Australia, Canada and New Zealand have been making enormous efforts to provide compensation to their countries' dispossessed indigenous populations while implicitly or explicitly apologising for the injustices inflicted upon

them. While, at a governmental level, the United States has not gone so far, American books and films have in recent decades depicted the "winning of the West" in less than glorious terms and have exposed the brutality and shame of the genocide of the Native Americans.

At least for now, South Africa is a miracle. If the elixir of forgiveness and reconciliation drunk by Nelson Mandela and his compatriots of all colours be identified, it should be bottled and widely distributed.

Both demographically and chronologically, Israelis face a much more difficult problem in accepting in their hearts and minds that those who preceded them on the land which Israelis have colonised and made their own are human beings entitled to basic human rights.

Both demographically and chronologically, Israelis face a much more difficult problem in accepting in their hearts and minds that those who preceded them on the land which Israelis have colonised and made their own are human beings entitled to basic human rights. In South Africa, the indigenous people remain an overwhelming majority, while in other settler-colonial states they have been reduced to tiny minorities. In Israel and Palestine, the victors and the vanquished are closer in numbers and the dispossession is closer in time. The wounds are still raw.

A durable Israeli-Palestinian peace is unimaginable so long as Israelis continue to dehumanise and demonise

Palestinians and to treat them accordingly. Yet, psychologically, how can they do otherwise? If Palestinians are human beings entitled to basic human rights, then the transformation of Palestine into Israel (indeed, the entire Zionist experiment) is morally and ethically indefensible, since no moral or ethical framework (other than a purely race-based one) could justify doing to human beings what has been done to the Palestinians over the past century and continues to

working to build a better world. As the 50th anniversary of Israel's replacement of Palestine on the map of the world approaches, perhaps it will no longer be taboo to pose the question whether political Zionism may not also have been a tragic mistake — not just for those who found themselves in its path but also for those who embraced it.

Whether there will ever be a true peace between Israelis and Palestinians depends less on the negotiated terms of any agreement than on the achievement of a moral, spiritual, and psychological transformation among both Israelis and Palestinians. Achieving such a transformation will be devilishly difficult, particularly after the crash of the once soaring hopes engendered by the recent "peace process." However, three sentences of self-evident truth, spoken solemnly, publicly and with humility by an Israeli prime minister (perhaps the next one, reasonably soon) would be an excellent starting place:

"We recognise that the realisation by the Jewish people of their destiny and their self-determination as a people and a nation has, inevitably and unavoidably, entailed great suffering for the Palestinian people. We understand that the Palestinian people view their fate as one of almost unparalleled injustice. We deeply regret this and hope that Palestinians (as well as Israelis) can now put the past behind them, focus firmly on present realities and future possibilities and accelerate and redouble their efforts to build a new and better society of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and human dignity in the land both our peoples love."

The 20th century's major "isms" — communism, fascism and Nazism — are now almost universally recognised to have been tragic mistakes, even if many who embraced them were idealists who honestly believed that they were

For Israel, a 50th birthday year of worry, division

By Thomas L. Friedman

WASHINGTON — Israel will soon begin a series of 50th anniversary celebrations. Unfortunately, most of the stories regarding this remarkable birthday are about the tremendous infighting among officials and parties over how to celebrate and what meaning to give to the moment.

This birthday dispute is not an isolated phenomenon. Everything you touch with Israel these days seems to lead to polarisation. Such polarisation happens when people feel a deep uncertainty, even panic, about the future. It is happening now because in Israel's 50th birthday year there is a certain panic that the frameworks for how Israelis should live with neighbours and how they should live with each other are both coming unglued.

Why? I asked one of my old teachers from Jerusalem, the Israeli philosopher David Hartman, director of the Shalom Hartman Institute. "The two key anchors holding Israeli society in place have come loose," he said.

"One was our faith that military strength guarantees survival. But then there was the intifada, the Scuds and the gas masks, and people realised there is no military solution."

"You need to deal with your neighbours. So we went for Oslo. At first, it seemed to be on the right track. But the longer it went on the less people felt that Arafat and the Arabs were really ready to accept Israelis as a people who had come home."

"And then Bibi Netanyahu came along. He conveyed to the Palestinians a sense that he wants to impose a solution on them, not to accept their legitimate aspirations."

The result, added Mr. Hartman, is a sense in Israel today that the left's solution of giving back land does not guarantee a change of heart in the Arab World, and that the right's solution — just saying "no" with strength — does not deliver a new future, either.

When neither the left nor the right can offer any secure resolution, the society becomes paralysed and polarised.

And then the other anchor came loose. Efforts to find a compromise on who is a Jew collapsed last week, when the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate of Israel rejected a deal that would give some legitimacy to Conservative and Reform rabbis.

"For years Israelis treated religion as if there were only two options — Club

Med or the ghetto," said Mr. Hartman. "Secular Israelis argued that building a Jewish state was enough to provide a Jewish identity. You didn't need synagogue or Torah. They believed religion was for the old country and those who represented it, the ultra-Orthodox."

"For decades this arrangement — the secular nationalists ran the country and the ultra-Orthodox ran religion — anchored Judaism in Israel. But it has come unstuck. The ultra-Orthodox gained more power and demanded more say in governing. At the same time, some of the secular decided they wanted more spiritual content to Israel, something between Club Med and religious fundamentalism."

In America, Reform and Conservative Judaism fill that gap, and they would like to do so in Israel. But Orthodox rabbis view Reform and Conservative as diluting Judaism. Reform and Conservative view themselves as the only way to save Judaism for another generation.

Both sides have a point, and it is critical that they find a way to cooperate. Because at a time when so many American Jews have drifted away from observance and Torah, Israel is the only vehicle through which their own Jewish identities, and Jewish history, are played out.

That is why Israel needs to be a framework that mediates the dialogue among all branches of Judaism. But if Israel's government is forced, under pressure from the Orthodox, not to declare the debate but to declare Orthodoxy the winner and reject Reform and Conservative, then, said Mr. Hartman, "many American Jews will feel exiled from their spiritual home."

So what to do? One option is the Netanyahu approach, which is to mirror all these tensions and ambivalences, stew in them, try to persevere within them, but never make the hard decisions that might open up new possibilities.

Another option, Mr. Hartman said, is to try to really overcome the ambivalences by taking bold initiatives to "create a climate of trust where those caught up in this polarisation might be able to find a way out."

Sure, not everyone will be happy with such initiatives. Sure, they entail political risks — but so does a 50th anniversary where the only thing all Israelis have in common is anxiety about the future.

The New York Times

M. KAHIL



U.S. designates Irbid estate as world's first 'Qualifying Industrial Zone'

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Industries established at Al Hassan Industrial Estate in the northern city of Irbid can now use what officials call the "gift" of having free trade status in U.S. markets.

The sprawling industrial estate, housing 54 plants making anything from textiles to electronic components, was officially designated as the world's first Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) at a White House ceremony on Friday.

The QIZ is at the heart of a U.S.-Israeli-Jordanian effort to deliver an elusive peace dividend to many of Jordan's disenchanted population.

"The momentum for peace will strengthen when the people and leadership in the Middle East realize that working with their neighbors will lead to their own prosperity. And today's action is an important step in that process," United States Representative Charlene Barshefsky, who announced the QIZ

designation told the ceremony.

Jordan Ambassador to Washington Marwan Mu'asher, who attended Friday's designation, said "the agreement on the QIZ represents a major cornerstone in [Jordan's] relations with the United States and a step towards promoting regional economic cooperation."

Industries established at the QIZ, 150 kilometers north of Amman and 40-minute drive to Israel's industrial heart, will have a duty free access to U.S. markets without any reciprocal benefits — a privilege only granted to Jordan and Egypt.

Jordan and Israel, in the presence of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, signed the agreement designating the QIZ at the Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Doha last November.

"It is a very good agreement for Jordan because it allows for unilateral, direct one-way free trade," Economist Yusuf Mansur told the Jordan Times Saturday.

"Such an agreement would cause no undue pressure on the state treasury."

The accord stipulates that Jordanian and Israeli manufacturers each contribute and maintain at least one third of the minimum 35 per cent content required under the Legislation and Proclamation for duty free treatment in the U.S.

Otherwise, both manufacturers are required to contribute and maintain at least 20 per cent of the total cost of production each, excluding profits.

However, many Jordanian business people feel bitter that the privilege of having free access to American markets comes at the expense of involving the 11.7 per cent material input from Israel.

This, they said, "would reinforce economic marginalisation with Israel at a time when Tel Aviv has failed to respect the peace deals it had concluded with the Arabs."

But according to Dr. Mansur, the QIZ would encourage the flow of investments to Jordan, generating over 1,500 jobs

in the near future.

He noted that the QIZ has already generated wide interest in the global business community and "investors as far away as Dubai, China and Malaysia have been making inquiries and expressing willingness to invest in the zone."

Dr. Mansur added that the agreement will also improve the balance of trade between Jordan and the U.S., heavily in favour of Washington.

The Kingdom's exports to the U.S. currently stand at \$16 million a year. Behind QIZ was a sole conglomerate, Century Investment Group, a Jordanian public shareholding company with an estimated equity value of more than \$100 million, employing 1,200 at its 12 factories established at the QIZ — all on a 50/50 partnership basis with world multinationals.

Ms. Barshefsky told Friday's ceremony that in addition to the eight Jordanian-Israeli joint ventures existing at the zone in Irbid, the QIZ will lead to

the establishment of six new ventures, including a Motorola cellular telephone plant and a hospital supplies factory.

"Interest in the benefits of QIZ is so great that plans already exist for an expansion of the Irbid [zone] and the addition of other QIZs elsewhere in Jordan and Israel," according to a U.S. Embassy statement.

The statement added that to encourage economic cooperation, Jordan and Israel have agreed to establish a joint committee to determine which products of businesses operating in the QIZ involve substantial cooperation and thus meet the standards of the bilateral agreement signed in Doha.

Also attending the designation ceremony in Washington were Israel's Ambassador to Washington Eliyahu Ben Elissar, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk, Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross, and other senior officials, the statement said.

Egyptian economic delegation to visit Gaza Monday

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian economic delegation is due to go to the Gaza Strip Monday to meet with Palestinian officials over ways to boost trade, the Palestinian embassy in Cairo said Sunday.

"The delegation will establish lists of Egyptian products to be exported to the Palestinian territories and low customs duties which can encourage Palestinian exports to Egypt," the embassy's economic adviser Barakat Al Farra told AFP.

He said trade between Egypt and the Palestinian territories is officially valued at less than \$8 million per year, but that in reality it was much greater.

"The true figure is around \$55 million, because most of the products are exported and imported in the suitcases of small businessmen who make round trips," he said.

Mr. Farra said that cement and other building materials, as well as food products, make up the bulk of Egyptian exports to the Palestinian territories.

Saudis set to tighten spending to offset low oil prices

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia is set to reverse a trend it has followed over the past two years by tightening spending to offset weak oil prices and keep its deficit under control, experts have said.

After overshooting expenditure projections in 1996 and 1997 because of strong crude prices, the world's dominant oil power will likely this year tighten its belt to contain the shortfall and avoid borrowing.

"There are two options for the kingdom this year: Either it remains committed to the projected spending and borrows the rest or it follows an austerity plan to keep the deficit at its forecast level," said Ihsan Abu Huleika, a Saudi economic expert.

"I believe it will be the second option because controlling the deficit has become a top priority for Saudi Arabia as it aims to release a balanced budget without any deficit at the end of the current development plan," he added.

The price of Saudi crude has tumbled to nearly \$12.5 a barrel this year compared with an average \$18 in the previous two years.

High prices lured Riyadh into exceeding projected spending by more than \$15 billion without widening the shortfall. They also turned a persistent current account gap into a surplus for the first time since the early 1980s.

Bankers said Saudi Arabia had assumed an oil price of more than \$16 for its 1998 revenues, which were projected at 178 billion riyals (\$47.4 billion).

Spending was put at as high as 196 billion riyals (\$52.2 billion), leaving a deficit of \$4.8 billion.

"High oil prices tempted Riyadh to spend more over the last two years and it could be compelled to spend less this year if prices do not improve," said Mohammad Al Asumi, chief economist at the Emirates Industrial Bank.

At current prices, Saudi Arabia could earn little more than \$30 billion in

1998. With non-oil exports projected at between \$5 billion and \$7 billion, total earnings could be close to \$40 billion, more than \$7 billion below estimates.

But experts said the Gulf state, which controls more than a quarter of the global oil wealth, had forecast an average price for the whole year and prices could firm up if OPEC managed to tackle the output surplus problem.

"Even if oil prices improve, you still do not know what will happen later ... they could fall back," Mr. Abu Huleika said.

"I think there will be a reaction by the Saudi government to guard against unexpected price movements by exercising restraint on expenditure. This is the best option because if you borrow now, how could you guarantee that there will be enough revenues in the coming years to repay," he added.

Apart from high crude price projections, Riyadh has also banked on an increase in its OPEC-assigned oil production quota of 760,000 barrels per day (bpd) above its previous share of eight million bpd.

The quota rise was within an overall increase of 10 per cent in the output ceiling of the 11-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Such an increase was a main factor in the recent collapse of oil prices along with the projected rise in Iraqi exports, a relatively warm winter in the northern hemisphere and the Asian financial crisis.

"Tightening expenditure could affect growth but it will reflect the government's strong commitment to the current fifth development plan, which focuses on tackling the deficit by 2000," Mr. Abu Huleika said.

"I also don't think Saudi Arabia wants to resort to foreign borrowing again," he said.



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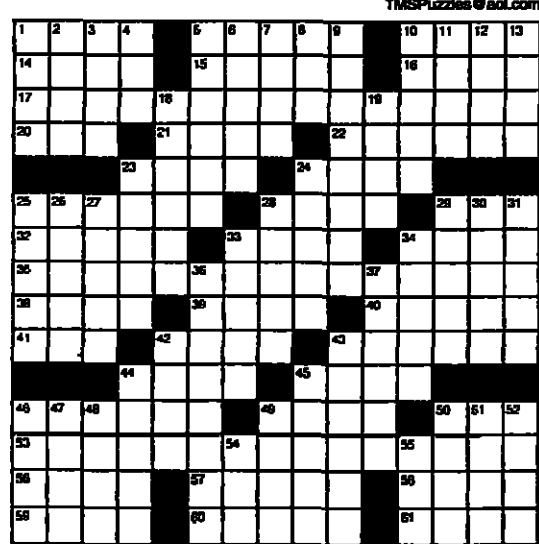
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Radisson SAS LG Electronics

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS
- 1 Captain of the "Pequod"
 - 5 Abrupt
 - 10 Clerical vestments
 - 14 Suburban side street
 - 15 Great success
 - 16 Actress Flynn-Boyle
 - 17 "For Whom the Bell Tolls" author
 - 20 Nav. non-com.
 - 21 Suckered
 - 22 Rental papers
 - 23 Wildbeasts
 - 24 Apportion (out)
 - 25 High-bar exercise
 - 28 Hustler from Minnesota
 - 29 Clan members
 - 32 Originating in the Orient
 - 33 Beer quantity
 - 34 Unit of force
 - 35 Novel by 17A
 - 38 Sawbucks
 - 39 Eye covetously
 - 40 Chris of tennis
 - 41 Tax grp.
 - 42 Lady Jane
 - 43 Brains
 - 44 Money for mercenaries
 - 45 Speaker's platform
 - 46 Irrational fear
 - 48 Morays
 - 50 Saut, Marie
 - 53 Character in 35A
 - 56 Car maker, for short
 - 57 Change to fit
 - 58 Rime
 - 59 Hardy heroine
 - 60 Course variety of cornucopia
 - 61 In this place



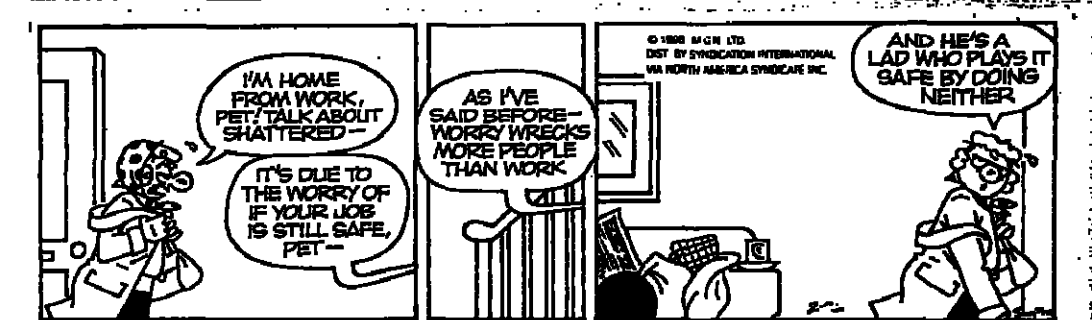
By Matthew Higgins
Concord, NH

- DOWN
- 1 Actor Baldwin
 - 2 Instrument with seven pedals
 - 3 Domini
 - 4 Hive builder
 - 5 Leaves bed
 - 6 Sore spots
 - 7 Luge
 - 8 Address
 - 9 Small dagger
 - 10 Pond scum
 - 11 Statutes
 - 12 Highland hillsides
 - 13 Vocalizes
 - 18 John, the
 - 19 NBA team
 - 21 Mirror
 - 24 Presbyterian personage
 - 25 Singer Page or LaBelle
 - 26 Peet's Frederick
 - 27 Mortgage attachments
 - 28 Young mare
 - 29 Kay the band leader
 - 30 Sluggish
 - 31 Make a home
 - 32 Knight's aides
 - 34 Operatic prima donnas
 - 36 Field movie
 - 37 Negligent
 - 42 Silver-tongued
 - 43 Pay
 - 44 Chasm
 - 45 Discourage
 - 46 Schvane
 - 47 Healthy
 - 48 Chances
 - 49 Back of the kitchen?
 - 50 Blackthorn
 - 51 Rip
 - 52 'Jane
 - 54 Shade tree
 - 55 Presidential
 - also ran from Minn.

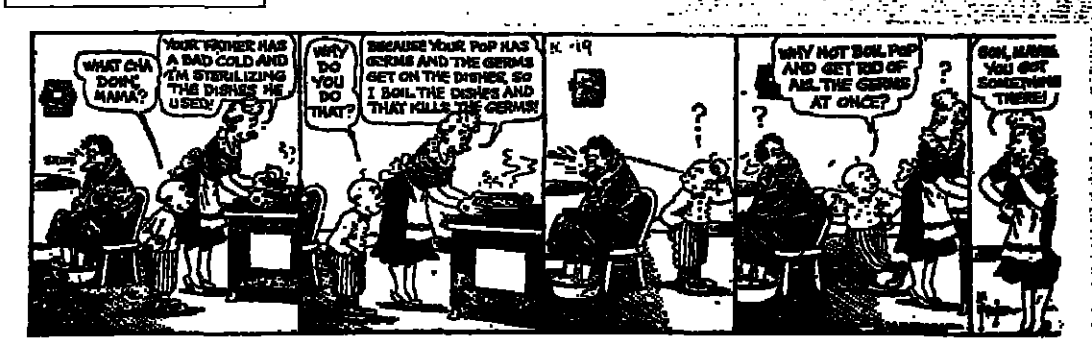
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're smarter, more energetic and luckier in love than usual. Be careful this morning, though. Something said in haste could hurt a friend's feelings. If you notice the conversation getting quiet all of a sudden, that's why. What you intended to say may not be what people heard. Ask an objective bystander for input.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're practical and hard working — important traits if you're going to be an entrepreneur. You may need a bit more education, but not necessarily from school. A friend may be able to teach you everything you need to know. Make a few inquiries, but wait before following through. Let the idea germinate for a while.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you finish your chores this morning, you'll have time this afternoon for romance. Distractions prevent you from taking care of practical matters tonight. Strive as you might, you'll probably just have to relax and play with your friends. If all else fails, borrow something from a sibling to wear on Monday.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Get an older person to talk to so you can figure out what's really going on. He or she may have been a little difficult to get along with lately. You're shrewd, and your intuition is good. You can have everybody playing nicely together by afternoon. Later, pay bills.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Make the rounds early, so by afternoon you'll be finished with the shopping and other chores. That's when your friends will start pestering you to come out and play. Travel conditions improve then, too. If you get tomorrow and the next day off, you could go somewhere exotic.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Although your credit cards sometimes feel like cash, they actually belong to the bank, remember? The next few weeks will be a perfect time to rearrange your debt so it's more to your advantage. Give that some thought today so you're ready to put your plan into the first part of the week.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Somebody else, possibly a member of your immediate family, will do something you think is ridiculous. Instead of criticizing, take it as your cue. Step in and teach this person, instead of making fun or getting mad. It's a slightly different approach, but quite valuable.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A hunch you get about a work-related matter is probably right. Make a note of it so you can follow through tomorrow morning. Meanwhile, don't let it interfere with your fund and games. If you're meeting with an older person this evening, be polite. Give him or her all your attention, and be well entertained.

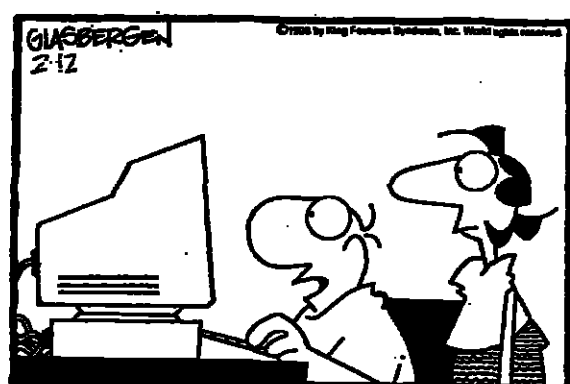
SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Household chores take up most of your morning. If you're thinking of taking a drive, there will be time this afternoon. Take a friend to visit someone you both enjoy. Your time together is more than just fun. It rejuvenates you for the whole next week. You owe it to yourself to make this connection.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Instead of snapping at a person who's being nice, ask for help instead. You could be pleasantly surprised. You don't have to solve the problem right now. You might not have to solve it ever. It could really be inconsequential, once you get your mind on something else for a while. Allow yourself to be distracted.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have a passion for digging out the facts. You want to know what works. That'll be easier to do for the next several weeks. You'll have an increased ability to cut through the superficial and get down to the bare bones. Think about a project at work and you'll be able to make the necessary corrections Monday morning.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a good morning for love — not just romantic love, but familial as well. Do something bonding early in the day, then get to work later. A household project can take up the whole afternoon and evening, but don't worry about a thing. It'll be a lot of fun.

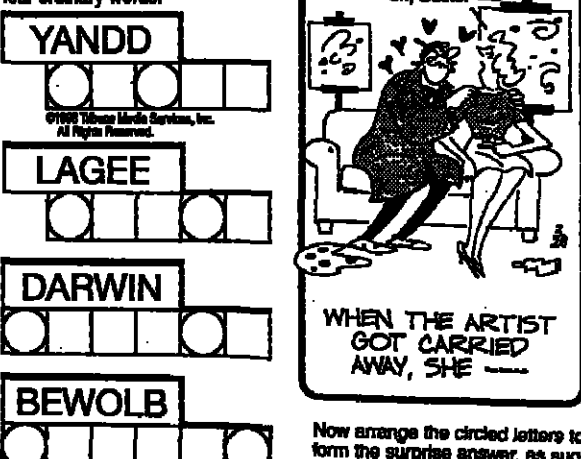
Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper



"With a computerized checkbook, we don't have to blame each other for being overdrawn. We can blame Bill Gates."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumble: LYING GAUDY BELLOW AMBUSH
Answer: How he liked to drink a beer — WHEN IT WAS "MUG-GY"

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Vehicles Owners Federation Company to distribute dividends at a rate of 12%

**** THE VEHICLES Owners Federation Company** will distribute JD144,000 in dividends at a rate of 12 per cent following the approval of the general assembly to distribute JD0.120 per share in dividends to shareholders. The company's total balance sheet at the end of last year amounted to JD2.58 million.

The company's annual report showed the total shareholder's equity standing at

JD2.24 million, total fixed assets amounting to JD443,900 and long-term investments totalling JD1.9 million compared to JD1.77 million at the end of 1996.

Net income after tax and allocations stood at JD279,000. Total earnings amounted to JD442,500 of which JD266,600 were earnings from land transport (Al Aswaq).

Ready Mix Concrete and Construction Supplies Company boosts sales to JD5.83 million

**** THE READY Mix Concrete and Construction Supplies Company** posted JD5.83 million in sales last year, JD2.2 million higher than the 1996 sales figure. The net result of operations, however, was a JD318,538 net profit which the general assembly approved distributing among shareholders to cover the shares that were not subscribed.

According to board Chairman Makram Alami, the company continued during 1997 to develop and increase its fleet of equipment and machinery in addition to improving and upgrading its product to conform to the best international specifications in the industry of ready mix concrete. As such, Mr. Alami said, the company was able to conclude deals with many prominent contractors in the Kingdom to supply them with ready mix concrete for major vital projects in the coun-

try. Mr. Alami told the general assembly that the company stood actual production at its new centre in Aqaba last year after achieving progress at the previous centre in Zarka. He said that the company has secured a vital project in Aqaba and that its share in the market has increased despite the rise in the number of new competitors.

"The company has started to erect the new equipment for the factory of horde blocks, interlocking paving stone, partition blocks, cement tiles and kerbstones. Mr. Alami said noting that experimental production will begin this month.

According to Mr. Alami, the company has started the necessary measures to obtain the ISO 9000 certificate and he expected to obtain it this year (Al Aswaq).

Gulf Arab gold demand hits record in '97

— WGC

DUBAI (R) — Gold demand in five Gulf Arab states hit a record 142.2 tonnes in 1997, up 21 per cent from the previous year, the World Gold Council (WGC) reported in its latest quarterly demand report.

Demand in United Arab Emirates, the largest centre in the Gulf for gold consumption, reached a total of 71.6 tonnes, 36 per cent higher than 1996, the WGC said.

Kuwaiti demand rose two per cent to 35.4 tonnes. Oman went up eight per cent to 17.3 tonnes. Bahrain posted 33 per cent growth to 10.6 tonnes and Qatar recorded a 10 per cent gain to 6.8 tonnes, the WGC said.

Higher imports were attributed to lower international gold prices, major shopping promotions and a surge of imports into Dubai to satisfy growing demand from India.

Grain, oilseed prices to rebound after short-term fall — study

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Abundant supply will drive down short-term prices of grains and oilseed in the short term, but prices should rise over the next two or three seasons, according to a recent study.

The Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) gave Congress its study of the 10-year agricultural outlook. FAPRI has given lawmakers its findings regularly since the institute was created in 1984.

FAPRI forecast that world soybean production would jump 14.6 per cent from 1996-1997 to 150.29 million tonnes in 1998-1999.

Over the same period, soybean prices are likely to fall 16 per cent to \$254 per tonne CIF Rotterdam, and 19 per cent FOB U.S. Gulf to \$233 per tonne, according to the study.

Soybean acreage should rise from 63.23 million hectares (MHA) (156.2 million acres) to 69.07 MHA (170.6 million acres) in 1998-1999 before leveling off over the following two years then rise steadily, FAPRI reported.

A price rebound should be helped by a rise in world demand for livestock feed, with China expected to boost soybean imports by 1.5 million tonnes and soy meal imports by three million tonnes over the next 10 years, the study said.

FAPRI said the ongoing price slump results from high prices in 1995 and 1996, which motivated farmers to boost production.

Wheat acreage will drop from 231.1 MHA (570 million acres) in 1996-1997 to 226.16 MHA (558.6 million acres) in 2000-2001 and then level off.

World wheat production will match rising consumption in the short run but fall behind over the long haul, causing the stock-to-use ratio to fall below 20 per cent, the study said.

That rising demand will mainly come from developing countries, FAPRI said.

Wheat demand continues to show the fastest increase in Asia despite the financial crisis there, followed by Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.

FAPRI forecast that prices should hit a low of about \$150 per tonne FOB U.S. Gulf and \$176 CIF Rotterdam, then rise to around \$170 and \$200 respectively in 2006-2007.

Corn should benefit from rising demand, as acreage was expected to plateau around 144 MHA over the next few years, according to FAPRI, which stressed that Asia remains a large market despite economic upheaval there.

U.S. prices were expected to fall to \$107 per tonne in 1999-2000, while FAPRI predicted European prices would drop to \$120, against \$121 and \$136 respectively 1996-1997.

They should then rise to \$122 and \$137, respectively, in 2006-2007.

China's decision to export corn despite a drop in domestic production and a rise in domestic demand has contributed to a drop in prices, said FAPRI.

The institute stressed that its world forecasts did not take into account new developments in the Asian financial crisis and the El Nino weather phenomenon.

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But it may dry up, at least a little, says Barings analyst Arturo Porzecanski, who called the 1997 figure "unprecedented."

"It will be very hard to repeat because of the Asia crisis," he said. Economies in South East Asia have been seriously undermined by falling markets.

Among governments, Argentina led the list of nations issuing bonds, with \$17.4 million worth. Brazil was second with \$15.9 million while Mexico came in third with \$14.9 million in bonds issued.

Latin America issues record amount of bonds in '97

NEW YORK (AFP) — International bonds issued by Latin American governments, banks and corporations broke records in 1997, hitting \$60 billion, analysts have said here.

The dollar amount of the bond issues — which exclude Brady bonds on Latin American debt backed by the U.S. government — triple the total issued in 1993-95 and far exceed the \$51 billion issued in 1996, said emerging market analyst Angela Rosario of ING Barings.

"1997 has been the best year for Latin America yet in terms of

access to international capital markets," said Ms. Rosario.

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REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	USD	GBP	JPY	CHF	DEM	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6545	106.48	0.7036	1.9362	1.6363	1.9362	166.37	200.48
DE Mark	0.6545	1.0000	163.63	0.7036	1.9362	1.6363	1.9362	166.37	200.48
GB Sterling	0.6545	1.0000	163.63	0.7036	1.9362	1.6363	1.9362	166.37	200.48
CH Franc	0.7036	0.7036	106.48	1.0000	2.4566	2.0535	2.0535	166.37	200.48
JP Yen	106.48	106.48	1.0000	0.0071	243.56	206.47	206.47	166.37	200.48
CA Dollar	0.7036	0.7036	106.48	1.0000	2.4566	2.0535	2.0535	166.37	200.48
IT Lira	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	166.37	200.48
NL Guilder	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	166.37
FR Franc	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000	166.37

Middle Eastern Currencies Prices as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	USD	GBP	JPY	CHF	DEM	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6545	106.48	0.7036	1.9362	1.6363	1.9362	166.37	200.48
Jordan Dinar	0.7036	0.7036	106.48	1.0000	2.4566	2.0535	2.0535	166.37	200.48
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Bahraini Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Qatar Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Emirati Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Lebanese L1000	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
Egyptian	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84

Energy Prices as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	USD	GBP	JPY	CHF	DEM	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
Brent	12.85	8.11	861.11	10.11	25.66	21.11	21.11	175.56	215.56
WTI	12.85	8.11	861.11	10.11	25.66	21.11	21.11	175.56	215.56
Bonny	12.85	8.11	861.11	10.11	25.66	21.11	21.11	175.56	215.56
Dubai	11.90	7.56	800.00	9.56	23.66	19.56	19.56	165.56	205.56
UL Gas	148.00	95.56	10000.00	115.56	3000.00	2455.56	2455.56	20000.00	24555.56

Mid-East Currencies Prices as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	USD	GBP	JPY	CHF	DEM	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
AE Dirham	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
KW Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
BH Dinar	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84
CY Pound	0.2666	0.2666	28.35	0.2666	0.6545	0.5412	0.5412	45.36	55.84

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid) as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	USD	GBP	JPY	CHF	DEM	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
USD	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58
GBP	7.58	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40
JPY	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34
DEM	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40
FRF	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72	3.72
CHF	0.88	0.88	0.88	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
ITL	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82	5.82

Main Equity Indices as at 7/03/98 19:13									
	Index	Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Prev	Vol	Turn
New York	DOW JONES	8589.39	124.06	1.48	8570.88	8444.88	8444.33	124.06	1.48
New York	S&P 500	1055.89	20.64	1.89	1055.89	1035.05	1035.05	20.64	1.89
London	FT-SE 100	5782.9	87.3	1.53	5791.8	5686.4	5686.5	87.3	1.53
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17131.87	283.42	1.58	17190.9	16864.3	16864.8	283.42	1.58
Paris	CAC 40	3489.22	57.42	2.57	3489.47	3388.03	3388.6	57.42	2.57
Frankfurt	DAX	4715.95	92.85	2	4723.1	4686.24	4682.4	92.85	2

11 million Chinese to lose jobs in 1998 — report

BEIJING (AFP) — The prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) has predicted in a new report that 11 million Chinese will lose their jobs this year, the official Xinhua news agency has reported.

The otherwise sunny forecast for 1998, put together by leading economists and sociologists, concluded that unemployment would be China's "biggest headache" during the year.

Economic growth will maintain a high rate, and sharp price increases will not occur, the report said, predicting that the private and service sectors will see rapid growth.

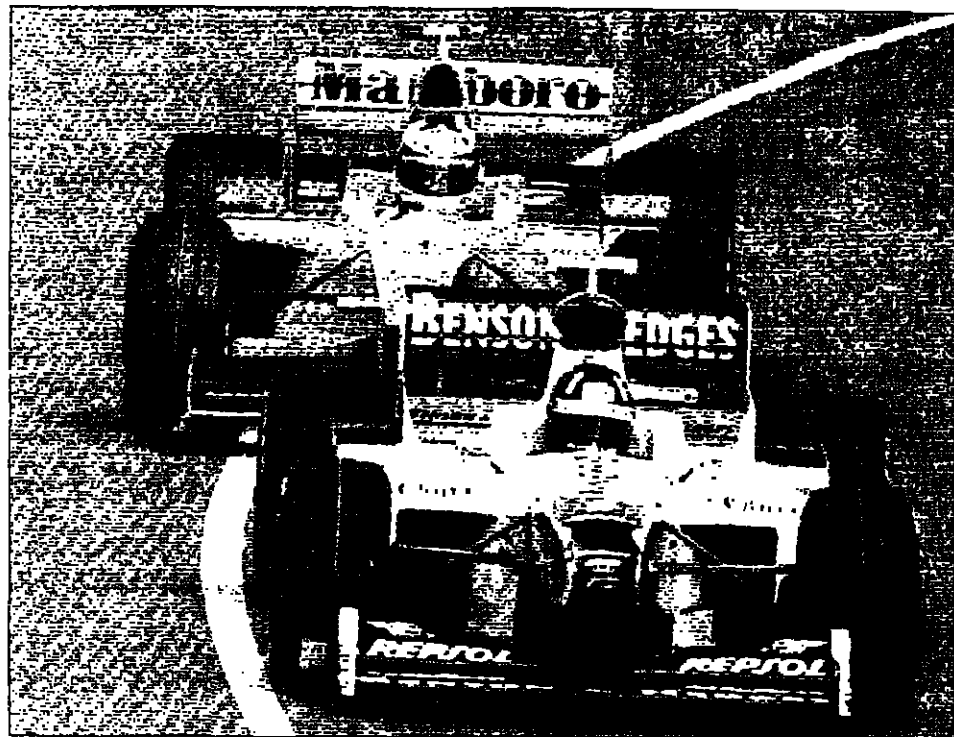
The government has identified market reforms of the largely inefficient state sector — which employs close to 110 million urban residents — as its top priority for the year.

Efforts to convert heavily overstaffed state-owned enterprises into competitive, profitable companies are expected to force layoffs in the tens of millions.

Reports of worker unrest has been on the rise in recent months, as fast-growing unemployment shakes social stability.

The CASS forecast comes on the heels of a ministry of railways announcement that the railways sector will shed 1.1 million jobs in the next two years.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179 ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 07/03/1998															
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE					
346,400	250,000	ARAB BANK	15.6	1.18	18	840	286860	343.00	339.00	4.00					
2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	4.3	0.00	4	750	1361	1.79	1.82	.03					
S 3,540	1,330	BANK OF JORDAN	4.3	0.00	5	1600	2190	1.35	1.36	.01					
1,300	890	MID-EAST INV. BK.	67.7	0.00	1	250	258	1.03	1.03	.05					
S 2,440	1,007	JOR. NATL. SEC. BK.	10.3	0.00	39	42550	1324	1.10	1.12	.02					
5,320	4,610	THE HOUSING BK.	29.9	1.94	4	24250	121240	5.00	5.00	-					
S 4,180	1,850	JOR. KUNAWAT BANK	10.0	0.00	2	979	1830	1.87	1.87	-					
924	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.2	10.00	5	5500	3850	6.99	7.00	.01					
4,190	2,320	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	20.3	0.00	1	7500	21075	2.86	2.70	.15					
N 2,700	2,700	ARAB JOR. INV. BK./NEW	0.0	0.00	1	2500	6750	2.70	2.70	-					
S 4,020	1,990	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.4	4.71	27	14240	29051	2.05	2.04	.01					
N 1,360	1,610	JOR. INV. FIR. BANK/NEW	8	0.00	1	500	1325	1.65	1.65	.04					
1,500	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	5	17.44	4	700	600	.84	.86	.02					
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 236.11 %CHG: -0.75	112	102159	549142	
S 2,400	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.6	10.59	11	9436	22396	2.33	2.36	.03					
S 2,300	1,200	BOLY LAM INSUR.	6.8	0.00	1	60000	78600	1.25	1.31	.06					
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 123.70 %CHG: +0.32	12	69346	100996	
2,120	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.2	4.72	31	18008	38222	2.10	2.12	.02					
T 4,400	2,450	HIMES MINERALS	50.5	0.00	2	3200	14784	4.40	4.62	.22					
3,050	2,060	SHIPPING LINES	12.5	6.05	3	600	1200	2.10	2.15	.05					
1,850	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	33	17100	19874	1.12	1.15	.03					
370	610	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	20.5	0.00	10	4400	388	1.38	1.40	.02					
T 8,900	6,700	ALRAI	9.4	6.50	12	3200	29650	6.83	9.23	.40					
1,480	1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	18.3	0.00	1	50	60	1.19	1.20	.01					
N 1,470	2,890	JORDA INTL. INV. EDUC.	11.3	1.16	42	18870	89925	4.42	4.55	.13					
900	900	ARAB EDUCATION	6	0.15	60	3025	96	1.58	1.58	.00					
1,030	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.18	39	22200	59606	1.76	1.78	.02					
810	600	UNION LAM DEV.	9	0.00	7	8500	5945	.67	.70	.03					
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 123.08 %CHG: +1.76	186	106078	242690	
4,450	2,690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.5	3.62	83	44166	113820	2.97	3.04	.07					
1,160	900	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.6	8.15	15	1046	11452	10.50	10.90	-					
2,610	1,260	INDUSTRIAL COMM. COR.	9	0.00	1	250	323	1.27	1.29	.02					
S 5,630	3,440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	15.4	3.58	90	39117	219820	5.58	5.59	.01					
S 7,200	2,200	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	4.5	4.95	1	100	220	2.20	2.20	.00					
2,940	2,250	JORDAN PAPER	9	9.65	1	100	285	2.85	2.88	.03					
6,250	4,400	DAR ALDAWA DV. INV.	15.4	3.97	15	13900	87638	6.25	6.30	.05					
3,460	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.7	8.71	4	1400	4018	2.73	2.87	.14					
610	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.0	0.00	60	88850	44625	5.0	5.2	.02					
1,160	680	ARAB PAPER CON. IND.	24.1	0.00	6	1700	61	1.70	1.79	.09					
1,140	660	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	5	992	655	.66	.67	.01					
650	510	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	5	3050	1778	.57	.60	.03					
1,030	570	INTERNED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	13	8250	3626	4.22	4.40	.02					
2,760	500	JOR. ROUGHEN INDS.	9	0.00	8	1000	3025	2.85	2.88	.03					
S 2,320	1,380	UNIV. CHEM. INDS.	13.5	6.67	6	1800	2700	1.43	1.50	.07					
S 3,000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE MFAC	29.1	0.00	42	36300	43596	1.15	1.21	.06					
3,700	1,300	JOR. STEEL IND.	18.0	0.00	61	87465	61800	1.60	.63	.03					
1,560	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	18.4	4.86	38	17733	72793	1.37	1.44	.07					
S 1,700	810	UNIV. MODN. INDS.	21	0.00	100	204650	202672	9.5	1.00	.05					
1,410	1,410	NATL. INDS. RESOURCES	19.9	12.38	18	8400	6789	.77	.81	.04					
1,620	1,350	NATL. TOBACCO CO.	14.6	4.20	1	4000	14324	3.55	3.55	.00					
T 1,010	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	19.2	0.00	67	139550	145671	1.00	1.05	.05					
1,080	1,290	EE -SAY READY WEAR	51.7	0.00	20	19700	28840	1.43	1.47	.04					
1,250	1,080	UNIV. TOBACCO	6	0.50	7	4245	4245	1.20	1.21	.01					
1,220	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	53.6	0.00	26	19520	32375	1.15	1.18	.03					
T 810	660	JORDAN STEEL	37.5	6.02	69	95057	78508	.79	.83	.04					
840	570	MID-EAST COMEX	8.1	15.15	14	33450	22092	.66	.66	-					
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 117.10 %CHG: +0.77	795	885301	1193968	
GRAND TOTAL											INDEX: 172.04 %CHG: -0.07	1105	1162974	2086796	
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 07/03/1998															
N 1,050	960	EXPORT & FIN. BNK. 75%	18.1	0.00	4	3350	2446	.98	.98	-					
520	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.9	0.00	25	47850	19143	.40	.41	.01					
660	800	UNIV. INV. SOF	9	0.00	16	82000	14365	.73	.73	.01					
620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	40	166750	81534	.48	.48	.00					
N 1,220	1,000	SPECIALIZED JOR. 75%	9	0.00	3	30000	29100	1.22	1.22	-					
640	440	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	7	4000	1860	.45	.47	.02					
720	440	ARAB MED. IND.	39.2	0.00	14	20700	12130	.38	.38	.02					
840	280	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	13	14250	5111	.35	.37	.02					
360	750	NATL. MILLS. GEN. NMICO	0	0.00	27	31350	12227	.39	.39	.02					
1,010	510	NATYAK DIST. MODULES	0	10.00	49	100	41	.39	.41	.02					
T 670	580	MIDEAST PHARM. 90%	9	0.00	28	46000	26270	.65	.68	.03					
720	550	RAIL PHARM.	9	0.00	2	2020	1424	.72	.72	.02					
440	460	IND. ENG.	0	10.85	10	1385	1315	.68	.69	.01					
830	510	IND. CERAMIC	14.9	0.00	16	8400	4849	.56	.57	.01					
N 950	580	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	26	27550	18444	.67	.67	-					
N 670	490	FEARL. BAR. P. CONV.	0	0.00	7	5000	4848	.66	.66	.00					
740	490	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	7	11750	6650	.56	.56	.01					
N 950	470	OPTICAL HEARING 75%	9	0.00	9	9550	3682	.66	.63	.02					
N 1,000	1,000	WAT. ALUMINUM. 75%	96.00	0.00	15	24100	10609	.69	.69	.00					
N 1,310	1,000	NUTRITAR	P	0.00	6	2698	2932	1.10	1.10	.01					



Ferrari driver Michael Schumacher of Germany (rear) tries to overtake Jordan driver Damon Hill during qualifying for tomorrow's Formula One Grand Prix in Melbourne. Finland's Mika Hakkinen set the fastest time in the session, with teammate David Coulthard second fastest, and Germany's Michael Schumacher third. (Reuters photo)

Australian GP

Hakkinen fastest, McLarens take front row

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Mika Hakkinen scorched to only his second pole position in 97 Grands Prix as McLaren took a grip on the season-opening Australian Formula One race here Saturday.

The Flying Finn, who broke through for his first GP win at Jerez in last season's final race, dived with his teammate David Coulthard of Scotland throughout qualifying to grab the top slot on an all-McLaren front row of the starting grid for Sunday's race.

It is the first time since the 1991 Australian GP in Adelaide, when Ayrton Senna and Gerhard Berger headed the grid, that McLaren have had the two fastest qualifiers and vindicates claims that the British team was well advanced after successful northern hemisphere winter testing.

Hakkinen, who almost lost his life during qualifying for the 1995 Australian GP in

Adelaide when the base of his skull was crushed during a crash, zipped around the 5.269 kilometre (3.161 mile) Albert Park circuit in one minute 30.010 seconds.

The time surprised 29-year-old Hakkinen as all teams are driving on slower grooved tyres this season and his fastest lap was just 0.641 seconds outside Jacques Villeneuve's fastest qualifying time for last year's race on faster slicks.

"The car handled really well and I think there is a chance we could go even quicker," said Hakkinen.

Coulthard, who carried off last year's race, was just 0.043 seconds slower than Hakkinen on 1:30.053, which was the fastest time halfway through qualifying.

Asked if he wanted someone else next to him on the grid, Hakkinen said: "He's my teammate ... it's nice him starting next to me."

Coulthard said: "I'm content with second (in qualifying). I've got a clear track

down to the first corner so I just need to concentrate on that."

The McLaren duo was more than seven-tenths of a second quicker than Ferrari's two-time world champion Michael Schumacher and around nine-tenths of a second ahead of current world champion Jacques Villeneuve in his Williams.

Schumacher, who was seething after being held up by British rival Damon Hill when he was on a hot lap late in the session, will have the inside slot on the second row of the grid with Villeneuve.

Schumacher is carrying the stigma of his infamous shunt on Villeneuve in the last race of the 1997 season in Jerez, which led him being stripped of his second place in the championship behind the French-Canadian.

"After the winter testing we expected McLaren to be very fast so we expected them to be in front of us ... our car is not up to the level (but) we will get to it very soon," said Schumacher.

Villeneuve had problems during the qualifying session and had to change cars.

Englishman Johnny Herbert in a Sauber and German Heinz-Harald Frentzen driving a Williams are on the third row ahead of Italian Benetton driver Giancarlo Fisichella and Schumacher's Ferrari teammate Eddie Irvine of Northern Ireland.

Emma George breaks another pole vault world record

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Australian Emma George has set yet another world pole vault record, establishing a new indoor best at an athletics meet here Saturday.

The one-time circus acrobat cleared 4.47 metres on her first attempt, bettering the height of 4.46 metres set by Czech Daniela Bartova in Berlin less than 24 hours earlier.

The meeting was designed to give George a chance at the record, with only three competitors in the competition - George, her Russian training partner Tatiana Grigorieva, and Australian junior champion Christie Elwin.

George failed in her first vault at 4.32m, but after clearing it comfortably on her second attempt, the 23-year-old then came up with her best vault of the night to sail over 4.47 metres for the record.

George then tried to take the bar up to 4.52 metres but could not repeat the timing and technique of her earlier clearance.

"It is very nice to have it back. It is nice to have both, but to me the outdoor record is nicer," she said.

"All major competitions, Commonwealth Games, Olympics and world championships are outdoors, I think it's really important to do well at those."

She said it had been a surprise to set the record at this stage, as she was jumping from a 12 step run-up, as she has been making improvements to her technique before returning to the long run-up.

It was the seventh time the indoor mark has been broken in a month, with Bartova, Iceland's Vala Florsdottir and Ukrainian Anzhela Balakhonova each holding it for a short period.

George now holds both the indoor and outdoor pole vault records, with her outdoor record of 4.57 metres being set in New Zealand two weeks ago.

Rural team defies expectations to win handball championship

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A new team on the horizon has taken the women's handball scene by storm after upstaging reigning champions Al Orthodoxi to win the title.

The team from Hartha, a village near Irbid, literally came out of nowhere, played against all odds and defied expectations to win the championship after a 30-23 win over the Orthodoxi Club team.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Suleiman Obeidat, president of Hartha Club expressed his delight especially as the team was formed after a couple of enthusiastic young ladies decided to regroup and play in the league.

"We gave them all possible facilities a small rural club can offer. It was their initiative 100 per cent," he said.

The team faced some hard times at first having limited places to train and meet.

"We don't have a training court so we had to make prior reservations at Al Hassan City or Yarmouk University," he pointed out.

Another obstacle was transportation.

"Although that was a problem, they were able to get around it with a smile and tried to find a solution," he added.

Three training sessions a week, understanding family members and friends and the support of a modest club became the ingredients for a winning team. But how?

"Dedication and only dedication can give you a winner," Obeidat stressed out.

That probably sounds right when such a team undertook the task of taking on a well established and sponsored team like Al Orthodoxi.

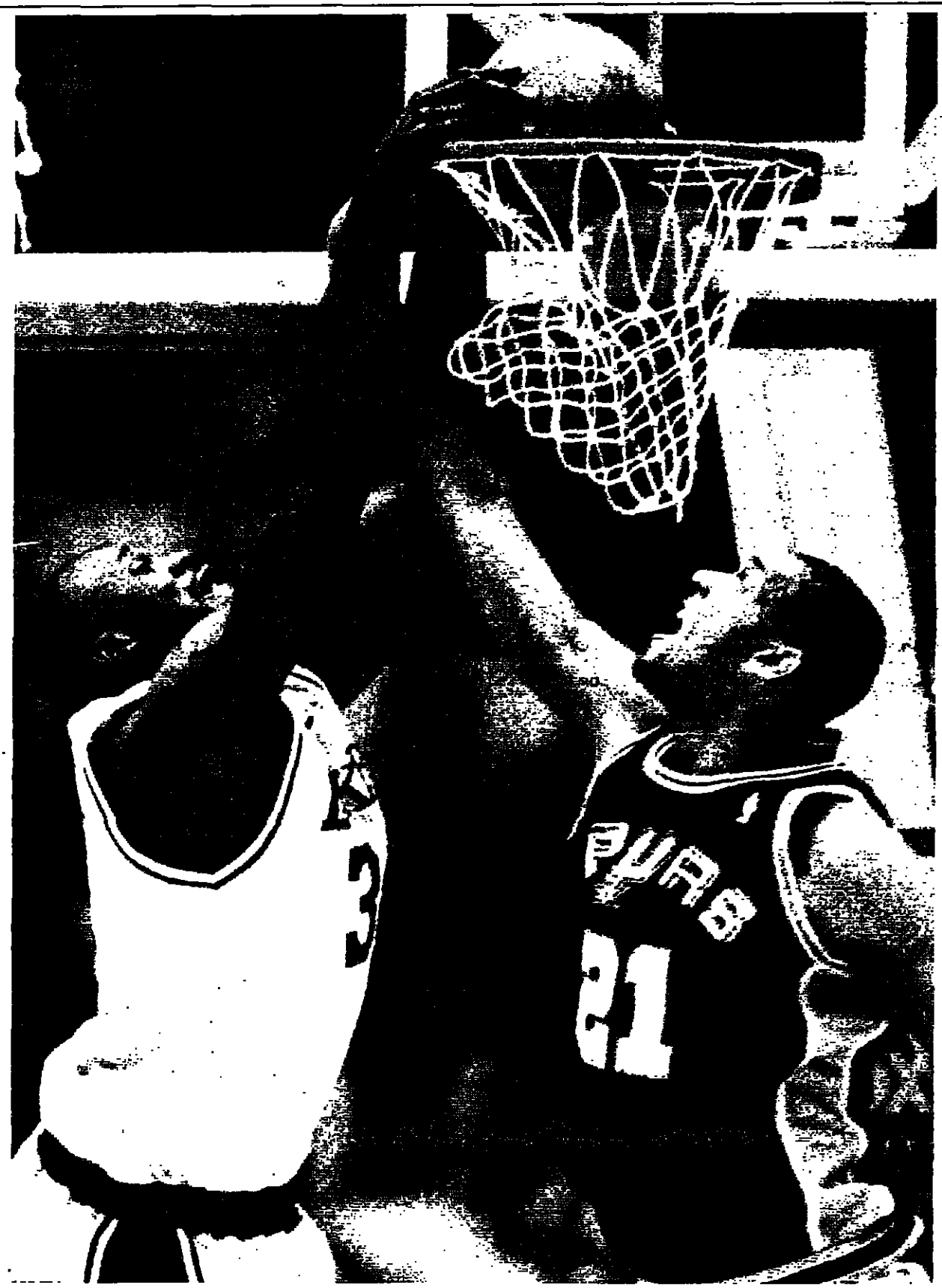
Furthermore, it seems that the new champions have left a good impression on the former champions.

"We were surprised by Hartha's performance, which was another element added to our loss. We had some misunderstandings and we therefore lost the match," captain of Al Orthodoxi team Lima Jallad explained.

As teams prepare for the new season, the titleholders reopened their lockers, but this time it is different. They are embarking on new challenges as champions.

"The girls are training two days a week at Al Hassan Sports City and are looking forward for the next championship in April," Obeidat said.

They are not a new team anymore, but the players have the same goal, another season ahead and another victory for the girls from Hartha.



Los Angeles Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal (L) gets the dunk over San Antonio Spurs' Tim Duncan in the first period of their NBA matchup in Inglewood. The Lakers won 91-84 (Reuters photo)

Jones stops 0.03 seconds short of 60-metre indoor record

MAEBASHI, Japan (AFP) — World 100-metre champion Marion Jones clocked the second fastest 60-metre dash time in history here Saturday, just three hundredths of a second outside the world indoor record. The 22-year-old American won the 60-metre dash in 6.95 seconds at the Gunma international indoor athletics meeting which otherwise produced mediocre results.

"I was a little disappointed because I aimed to break the world record," Jones said, adding that she was in such fine condition that she could have run in 6.80 seconds.

Jones broke away to an early lead and didn't look back to win by a huge 0.27 seconds ahead of Nigerian runner-up Chioma Ajunwa.

Her time was 0.03 seconds outside the world indoor record of 6.92 seconds, set twice by Russian Irina Privalova in 1993 and 1995. Jones crowned her return to athletics with her 100-metre victory at the world championships last August after a two-year break during which she played basketball at the North Carolina University.

She said that her goals were to run 100 metres in 10.50sec and 200 metres in a world record time. Her compatriot Florence Joyner holds the world records of 10.49 and 21.34sec for the two sprint distances.

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GOREN BRIDGE

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& TANNAN HIRSCH

MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ J 9 4 2
♥ 2
♦ J 5 3
♣ A K 6 5 2

WEST
♠ K 7 5
♥ J 10 9 7
♦ A Q
♣ J 10 9 7

EAST
♠ 10 8 6 3
♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ 10 9 7 6
♣ 4 3

SOUTH
♠ A Q
♥ A K Q 5
♦ K 8 4 2
♣ Q 4 3

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 1A Pass
2NT Pass 3NT Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♣

When you have the entries to move freely between the closed hand and dummy, you can be very flexible in planning the play. When one hand is short of entries, however, you must time matters carefully so that you have access to that hand at the right moment.

North-South were playing five-

over-one response as a game force. As a result, North was too weak to venture two clubs, and showed the fourth spade suit instead. The rest of the auction needs no comment.

West led the jack of hearts, and it did not take a genius to realize that there was going to be no problem unless clubs broke 4-1 or worse and the king of spades was offside. Unfortunately, there was no outside entry to dummy's clubs, so declarer had to proceed with care to assure nine tricks.

The heart opening was won in hand and declarer immediately led the queen of spades. West took the king and reverted to hearts, but declarer was in control.

The heart was taken and, after unblocking the ace of spades, declarer continued with a low club, ducked in dummy. When both defenders followed as East won the trick, the contract was safe. At best, a diamond shift could not net the defenders two tricks. But declarer could win any return, come to hand with the queen of clubs to cash the remaining high heart, then lead a club to the table to score four club tricks and the jack of spades. In all, declarer reeled in two spades, three hearts and four clubs.

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Demi Moore ... in
G.I. JANE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15,
8:30, 10:30

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28 riders qualify for Endurance Race; team returns from Abu Dhabi

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Royal Equestrian Federation has expressed satisfaction after a successful weekend, both domestically and internationally.

Domestically, the Aqaba Endurance Race shortlisted 28 qualifiers for October's Emirates Airlines Endurance Race — the highlight of the domestic season held as part of the annual Arabian Horse Show.

Run over 68km, a vet-gate at the half-way stage eliminated 22 horses, and the vet-gate at the finish eliminated a further 14, leaving the 28 automatic qualifiers. 12 horses were eliminated before the race, so only 64 started.

Zayed Da'jeh came first after 4 hours and 52 minutes, followed by Abdullah Kamal, Atef Anan, Jocelyn Abu Ragheb (the highest placed lady rider) and Mohammad Abaid.

The first five were all within 6 minutes of each other. All four lady riders participating completed the course and qualified for the October event.

Horses are eliminated if they do not fulfil the stringent

requirements set by international regulations. These include rules on lameness and heartbeat, as well as the rider's treatment of the horse.

The close finish was attributed to the ruling not allowing horses to be ridden at more than 15 kilometres per hour, an attempt by the federation to instil some restraint on the riders that they start to pace themselves.

The Jordan Equestrian Federation is hoping to have several horses ready and fit to compete over the much harder 120km distance of the World Cup to be held in Qatar later this year, and saw this tournament as valuable training as well as competitive experience.

Internationally, Jordan's show jumpers are expected back tomorrow after taking place in the Abu Dhabi International Show jumping tournament over the weekend.

Although the event was won by a Saudi, Jordan's Sinan Nashashibi came an impressive third.

Hani Bisharat and Sireen Rasekh also participated, but failed at the 'joker' — the most valuable fence and often the hardest.

Klinsmann to quit Spurs

LONDON (AFP) — German international striker Jurgen Klinsmann will quit Tottenham at the end of the season after being involved in a row with manager Christian Gross.

"I will give my best until the end of the season and then we will go different directions," Klinsmann said Friday.

"Christian and I obviously have totally different opinions about things. But I just don't want any more of this stuff going on because we have enough problems with the relegation battle."

"At the end of the day, he is the manager and I respect that even if I do have different ideas. I have tried to give my input but reached a certain point last week when our ideas differed," he told the Evening Standard.

Klinsmann and Gross had a heated row in the White Hart Lane tunnel after the home game against Bolton last Sunday.

The clash followed a 1-0 win that eased the pressure on the crisis-hit club.

Gross said in a statement: "It is true that

there was a row between Jurgen Klinsmann and myself after our win over Bolton."

"He was the only player not happy with what was a vital result and this was simply because he did not agree with where I had decided to play certain players and, in particular, David Ginola. I could not understand his reaction."

"I have the greatest respect for what Jurgen has done in a long and successful international career but he is still a squad member and has to accept my decisions about who I play and where I play them."

"We still have nine crucial games ahead of us until the end of the season and I need a very positive attitude from him to help the team."

"After all, as everybody knows, when Jurgen rejoined us it was very clear that he was coming here for six months to help us out of our problems and it is that help that we and all our fans now need."

Spurs have had a troubled time following the departure of former manager

Gerry Francis in November.

Club captain Gary Mabbutt was told he had no future at White Hart Lane, but Spurs later promised him a job for life after he finished playing.

Gross, the former Grasshopper coach, has introduced a much stricter regime at Tottenham — including players staying in hotels on nights before matches. This has not been a popular move with the club's big-money stars.

Gross has also introduced training sessions on the morning of home matches. Players, it is thought, had difficulty adapting to the change in routine.

Klinsmann, 33, has had a poor time since returning to Spurs, where he had an incredible first year before leaving for Bayern Munich.

He has scored only one goal in seven games in a team that has managed only 26 goals in 29 Premiership games.

Klinsmann had his cheekbone smashed in the FA Cup fourth round replay defeat at Barnsley.

SCOREBOARD

English FA Cup	Quarter-final
Coveley	Leeds
Leeds	Coveley
Scottish Premier	Dundee
Dundee	Leeds
Bundesliga	1996 Munich
A. Dieckhoff	Hansa Rostock
Cologne	Karlsruhe
Werder Bremen	Bochum

Portugal First Division	A. Coimbra
Belgium First Division	Genk
Netherlands First Division	Fortuna
French First Division	Metz
Lyon	

Boston	Atlanta
Charlotte	Utah
Orlando	Philadelphia
Minnesota	Sacramento
Indianapolis	LA Lakers

Everett	1st round
Nashville	2nd round
Anta	3rd round
Baller	4th round
Naoko	5th round
Sandra	6th round
Julie	7th round
Al	8th round
Barbara	9th round
Joanne	10th round
Silvia	11th round
Florence	12th round
Li	13th round
Rutana	14th round
Tamara	15th round

Scottish	Quart. final
Tommy	4-1
Andrew	4-2
James	4-3
John	4-4
Robert	4-5
David	4-6
William	4-7
Thomas	4-8
Richard	4-9
John	4-10
David	4-11
William	4-12
Thomas	4-13
Richard	4-14
John	4-15
David	4-16
William	4-17
Thomas	4-18
Richard	4-19
John	4-20
David	4-21
William	4-22
Thomas	4-23
Richard	4-24
John	4-25
David	4-26
William	4-27
Thomas	4-28
Richard	4-29
John	4-30

Home players upset the favourites

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Britain's third seed Greg Rusedski, the winner at Antwerp two weeks ago, came unstuck at the \$750,000 ATP tournament here Friday when he was 'out-aced' and finally outplayed in the quarter-finals by home hope Richard Krajicek.

The fifth-seeded 1996 Wimbledon champion scored a 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/3) win firing down 24 aces to Rusedski's six.

In another upset, Dutch player Jan Siemerink put out top-seeded Australian Patrick Rafter by scoring a



Holland's Richard Krajicek returns a serve to Britain's Greg Rusedski during their quarter final match at the \$725,000 men's World Indoor tennis tournament in Rotterdam. Krajicek won 3-6 7-6 (7-2) 7-6 (7-3) (Reuters photo)

6-4, 6-4 win. Other players to reach the semi-finals were Brett Steven of New Zealand and

Thomas Johansson of Sweden. Steven came back to beat Tomas Carbonell of Spain 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5

while Johansson scored a 7-6 (10/8) 6-2 win over Johan Van Herck of Belgium.

Rain halts Agassi match; Costa out

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi, playing in windy, chilly conditions, ran into a first-set rain interruption and was unable to finish his quarter-final Friday night against qualifier Jan-Michael Gambill at the \$340,000 ATP Tour event here.

Agassi, winner of his last event in California in February, led the 20-year-old American 4-3 with a break of serve when the first showers struck.

Two hours later, the remainder of the match was put back to noon Saturday with the winner advancing into a semi-final later in the day.

Agassi has won 13 matches against two defeats in 1998 as he storms back towards an elite ranking after starting the

season with a run to the semi-finals in Adelaide, and a title in San Jose last month.

German Tommy Haas dealt successfully with the conditions to oust Canadian Sebastian Lareau 6-4, 6-1 in less than an hour. He will face either Agassi or Gambill.

Dutchman Sjeng Schalken mastered the gusty winds early in the day to oust second seed Albert Costa 6-3, 6-4.

"It was really tough conditions, the wind was coming from everywhere," said Schalken, now 8-6 for the year. "But I kept confident and thought positive."

"The match standard was not that bad. It was tough to keep your confidence, we were both missing balls that

we normally wouldn't.

Schalken broke in the seventh game of the second set to insure victory. He was the only Dutchman in the field, with seven compatriots playing indoors this week at a home event in Rotterdam.

The victory over Costa, a clay-courter who ranks 22nd after standing ninth last April, was especially satisfying for Schalken, who lost his first four clay meetings against the Spaniard before taking a first win last summer on hardcourt in Boston.

The World No. 65 will face Australian Jason Stoltenberg, who beat Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi 7-5, 7-6 (14/12), for a place in the final. Stoltenberg, who missed the last four months of 1997 with a right knee injury which did

not require surgery, improved to 11 wins, four defeats for the year with his win over Gaudenzi.

The 27-year-old Florida-based Australian began 1997 with a runner-up finish in Adelaide to teenage compatriot Lleyton Hewitt, who is entering next week's Champions Cup at Indian Wells, California, on a wild card.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

First-timer takes men's downhill

KVITFJELL (AFP) — Frenchman Nicolas Bertin won his first ever World Cup race when he took the men's downhill here on Saturday with a time of 1min 44.07secs. Italy's Werner Perathoner was second in 1:44.18 with Norway's Lasse Kjus and Austria's Josef Strobl third in 1:44.29.

Kaiserlautern held again

BONN (AFP) — Kaiserslautern moved seven points clear of Bayern Munich at the top of the German first division Friday after being held to their second league draw in as many matches when they finished 1-1 at Werder Bremen. Bayern Munich play UEFA Cup champions Schalke on Sunday. In the first-half of Friday's match, Kaiserslautern were lucky not to have had a penalty awarded against them. Minutes later Bremen's Austrian midfielder Heimo Pfeiffenberger made amends, however, finding space and heading home in the 14th minute. Kaiserslautern had to wait until ten minutes before the half-time whistle to equalise. In the other match between two relegation-threatened clubs, Bochum were held 0-0 at home by Hamburg.

Bartova sets new World record

BERLIN (AFP) — Daniela Bartova of the Czech Republic set a new indoor pole vault world record here Friday when she soared over at 4m46. The former world record of 4m45 was set by Anzhela Balakhonova of the Ukraine at the European Indoor Championships in Valencia on March 1.

Newcastle star arrested

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle United and Northern Ireland international footballer Keith Gillespie was arrested Friday over an alleged incident at an hotel. The 23-year-old winger voluntarily attended Whickham police station in the north-east of England accompanied by his solicitor. It is believed the arrest followed an incident at the Gibside Arms, at nearby Gateshead, on February 15. Gillespie is understood to have been visiting a guest at the hotel.

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Iraq urges U.K. to stop hampering oil accord

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq told Britain on Saturday to stop hampering the implementation of the new U.N. oil-for-food accord, which boosts the amount of oil Baghdad can sell to pay for humanitarian supplies.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook called Thursday for an international conference on Iraq's new oil-for-food deal to ensure that it is geared to help the Iraqi people.

"If Britain is really anxious to implement the new programme... it must stop putting unjustified obstacles preventing approval of contracts concluded by Iraq," an Iraqi oil ministry spokesman said.

"If not, the British minister's proposals will serve only to hide its evil intention to interfere in Iraq's international affairs," the spokesman added, the official INA news agency reported.

"For Iraq, this programme is a short-term temporary

arrangement and Baghdad's basic request is for the lifting of the sanctions, starting with the oil embargo," he said.

The U.N. Security Council on Feb. 20 increased the amount of Iraqi oil sales in the accord from \$2 billion every six months to up to \$5.2 billion.

"We intend to ensure that the Iraqi regime is offered the chance to make the best possible use of the scheme," Mr. Cook said on Thursday, calling for an international conference including the United Nations, other major donors, non-government organisations and key Arab governments.

"If they reject that chance, the international community and the Arab World will know who to blame for the suffering of the Iraqi people," Mr. Cook added.

Under the oil-for-food accord in force since December 1996, two-thirds of the oil profits are set aside for

badly-needed food and medicine, while the rest covers compensation for the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the cost of U.N. weapons inspections.

"We want to remind the British secretary that it was his government which worked along with the United States to prevent the implementation of contracts during the first phases of the accord leading to delays in the arrival of food and medicines," the Iraqi spokesman said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf left Saturday for New York, where he is due to hold discussions on Sunday with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on the new deal.

Iraq has said it can export no more than \$4 billion worth of oil every six months because of the poor state of its production facilities which were damaged during the 1991 Gulf war.

U.S. opposes giving U.N. arms team Russian deputy

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said on Friday he opposed giving chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler a Russian deputy and would veto the idea if it came before the Security Council.

Russia's Ambassador Sergei Lavrov has asked Secretary-General Kofi Annan to name a Russian official as a deputy to chief weapons inspector Richard Butler, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) responsible for disarmament in Iraq.

Mr. Butler's sole deputy currently is Charles Duelfer, an American.

Mr. Richardson told reporters at the United Nations he did not like the idea of creating the post. "We think UNSCOM works well, UNSCOM is effective as it is, but we will support Chairman Butler if he feels he has to diversify personnel," he said. In a later interview with CNBC Television, he said: "We would veto that" if the issue of a second deputy came to the Security Council.

"But that is a decision that Butler should make," Mr. Richardson said. "We trust Butler. We think he has been honest. He has been effective. If he thinks he needs to balance professionalism, not by

geographic or ethnic or country lines, it is going to be his decision. But we are not crazy about it," he said.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry also said the decision would be up to Mr. Butler, with Security Council approval.

But knowledgeable diplomats disagreed, saying the creation of a second deputy post was up to Mr. Annan, U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard pointed to the original UNSCOM set up in 1991 and said Mr. Annan was seeking legal advice.

The decision to create one, not two, deputies for the UNSCOM chairman was made by then Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar in April 1991. His report on setting up UNSCOM was later accepted by the Security Council.

The diplomats said setting up additional deputy posts was out of Mr. Butler's hands, although he could name the people who held any such positions. Mr. Eckhard told reporters Mr. Annan was still studying Russia's letter. "He just reviewed this morning the letter from the Russian ambassador that there be a Russian deputy of UNSCOM and he is still reviewing that letter," he said.

Russia's request would put

Moscow in a key position to determine whether Iraq was still hiding weapons of mass destruction.

Diplomats said Russia felt left out of UNSCOM's political decision-making executive group.

At the request of France, Mr. Butler recently appointed Eric Fournier, a foreign ministry official specialising in disarmament, to his executive offices, which include staff members of various nationalities.

During a November meeting of UNSCOM's board of commissioners, which serves more or less as an advisory group, Russia proposed unsuccessfully that Mr. Butler have five deputies — one each from Russia, France, China and Britain in addition to Mr. Duelfer. The five countries are permanent Security Council members.

Over the past few months, Moscow has sought to pave the way for relaxing the punishing sanctions imposed on Iraq in August 1990 after Baghdad's troops invaded Kuwait, touching off the Gulf war six months later.

One key requirement for lifting sanctions is Mr. Butler's certification that Iraq no longer has any weapons of mass destruction or related equipment.

Turkey warns of Kosovo spillover

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem warned Saturday of the danger that violence in Kosovo would spill over to other areas.

"Turkey cannot remain indifferent to the oppression, the persecution and the killings of innocent people in these incidents," Anatolian news agency quoted Mr. Cem as saying.

He was referring to clashes in the past week between Serbian security forces and ethnic Albanian militants which left at least 42 dead, Albanian sources put the toll at 75 dead.

Mr. Cem made the remarks just hours before his scheduled departure for Belgrade, where he is to meet Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanovic and President Slobodan Milosevic.

Speaking to reporters in Kayseri, 300 kilometres southeast of Ankara, Mr. Cem said he hoped the Kosovo crisis could be resolved quickly.

"If the Kosovo incidents escalate, they could draw in several Balkan countries. Greece and Turkey could find themselves involved," he said.

Turkey has sought to play an active role in promoting a settlement in Kosovo, a former territory of the Ottoman Empire.

U.S. general to visit Mideast

WASHINGTON (R) — Army General Henry Shelton, the U.S. military's top officer, will visit Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt beginning on Saturday, the U.S. Defence Department said on Friday.

Gen. Shelton will arrive in Saudi Arabia on Saturday and hold talks on Sunday with Saudi officials and visit U.S. military units in the kingdom before going on to Kuwait and Egypt. He will return to Washington next Thursday.

On Monday, the general will go to Kuwait for meetings the following day with Kuwaiti defence and military leaders.

He will also be briefly available for the media on Tuesday when he visits troops participating in joint U.S.-Kuwait "intrinsic action" military manoeuvres.

The United States has gathered a major military force in the Gulf region and has threatened to strike Iraq if Baghdad does not keep its agreement to allow unconditional U.N. arms inspections in the country.

Iran denies any nuclear contract with Ukraine

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran denied on Saturday any contract with Ukraine to buy specialised turbines for a Russian-built nuclear plant after state radio criticised Kiev for halting nuclear cooperation with Tehran under U.S. pressure.

"Iran has no contract with Ukraine in regards to the manufacture of nuclear energy turbines. Raising such an issue by Ukraine is surprising," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi.

"Such baseless propaganda is undertaken by the United States and the Zionists with the aim of pressuring an independent country from developing its economy and industry," he said.

"Iran's nuclear programme is transparent and in accordance with international regulations," Mr. Mohammadi said, quoted by the official news agency IRNA.

"It is Iran's legitimate right and it will not deny itself of the right to use peaceful nuclear energy for development."

Earlier, Iranian state radio slammed Ukraine for bowing to U.S. pressure and halting nuclear cooperation with the

Islamic Republic, saying it showed up Kiev as an unreliable trade partner.

"Ukraine is only losing its political and commercial credibility by reneging on its commitments. For a long time to come, it will lack the qualifications to boost relations with Iran," said Iran's state radio.

"Iran has no need for Ukraine's unreliable partnership," it said, accusing Ukrainian leaders of "succumbing to America's humiliating attitude and threats."

The United States unveiled a new 30-year nuclear cooperation accord with Ukraine on Friday after Kiev announced it had pulled out of a contract to supply specialised turbines to the nuclear power station in the southern Gulf port of Bushehr.

"This is hardly a solution. It will only give the United States a greater headache in having now to deal with a bigger power like Russia, which has never bowed to U.S. pressure on Iran," said the radio.

Russia had warned Ukraine that it would cut Kiev out of supply contracts for other Russian nuclear power projects abroad if it pulled out of

the deal.

The radio praised Russia for its "firmness and independence," saying it proved Moscow's "special attention to the Islamic Iran."

"Russia's position is very painful for the Americans and Israelis, while Iran has lost nothing except for Ukraine's unreliable partnership and a better and more reliable commitment from Russia for its atomic needs," it added.

The U.S. and Israel, which accuse Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, are pressuring Russia to scrap the \$800 million deal to build the 1,000 megawatt nuclear Bushehr reactor.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma said estimated losses of \$45 million as a result of its decision to pull out of the Iran deal would be more than compensated for by U.S. promises of space industry cooperation, once Kiev signs an international accord on the export of sensitive missile technology.

But U.S. officials have estimated that Ukraine stands to lose hundreds of millions of dollars if Russia denies Kiev contracts.

GCC foreign ministers meet

DUBAI (R) — Gulf Arab foreign ministers began a meeting in Saudi Arabia on Saturday expected to discuss relations with Iran, the situation in Iraq and the Middle East peace process.

The official Qatar news agency said the meeting began on Saturday afternoon. The ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) six-member states are also due to discuss other political, economic and military issues at the two-day meeting.

GCC Secretary General Jumeil Al Hajjailan told the London-based Asharq Al Awsat newspaper that the GCC was eager to develop ties

with non-Arab Iran based on mutual trust, but demanded Tehran resolve a dispute with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over three Gulf islands claimed by both Iran and the UAE.

"We in the GCC recognise the neighbourly relations we have with Iran, a large Muslim country, and seek to establish ties based on mutual trust, cooperation and stability," he said in the paper's Saturday edition.

"Our wish to cooperate with Iran is one of the basic principles of the GCC," he said.

The Riyadh-based GCC is a political and economic alliance grouping Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar

and Oman.

One of the issues tainting ties between the Gulf Arab states and their neighbour across the strategic waterway is a drawn-out dispute over three islands claimed by both Iran and the UAE. Abu Musa and the greater and lesser Tunbs are located near oil shipping lanes at the mouth of the Gulf.

"We hope that this GCC stand towards Iran would make the Islamic Republic of Iran respond to efforts to resolve the problem of the three UAE islands occupied by Iran peacefully through negotiations or by going to the International Court of Justice," Mr. Hajjailan said.

Judge allows lawsuits against Libya

NEW YORK (R) — An attorney representing the families of four killed in the 1988 mid-air bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, said on Friday that victims' families can now sue Libya for damages.

Attorney Aaron Broder, who won the largest of the damage awards against Pan Am Corp. in the Flight 103 disaster, said a ruling last week by U.S. Federal Judge Thomas Platt paves the way for survivors of the 189 Americans killed in the bombing to sue Libya for millions of dollars in punitive damages.

"This landmark decision allows us to bring to justice the killers themselves, the Libyan government," Mr. Broder said.

Ruling in the eastern district

of New York, Judge Platt last week denied a motion by the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya that as a sovereign nation it could not be sued by U.S. citizens.

The judge ruled that a 1996 amendment to the foreign sovereign immunity act allowed courts to make exceptions to sovereignty rules for countries that were deemed terrorist nations by the U.S. secretary of state. That amendment can be applied retroactively for 10 years, covering the bombing.

"Any foreign state would know that the United States has substantial interests in protecting its flag carriers and nationals from terrorist activities and should reasonably expect that if these interests were harmed, it would be subject to a variety of potential

responses, including civil actions in United States courts," Judge Platt wrote.

Mr. Broder's partnership with famed lawyer F. Lee Bailey dissolved over the course of the Lockerbie case when Mr. Bailey provided legal counsel to Libya, Mr. Broder said.

Meanwhile at the United Nations, the Security Council on Friday retained without change the sanctions imposed on Libya since 1992 for failing to hand over two suspects in the bombing.

But, at the request of Arab and African countries, council members agreed during private consultations earlier this week to hold a full-scale debate on March 20 on the Libya sanctions.



Hardcore and 'yuppie' bikers face off at bike week

DAYTONA BEACH (R) — Daytona Beach's main street was clogged with leather-clad bikers celebrating "Bike Week," but many bikers were disgusted at how upscale it had become. "Yuppies buncha damn sissies is all," shouted Bubba Willets, of the Outlaw bikers club, watching the parade of Harley-Davidsons, Nazi-style helmets and tattooed, beer-bellied men and scantily clad women. The Outlaws complain "weekend warriors" are robbing them of their heritage. "Main street used to be ours," said Robert Smith, head of Daytona's Outlaws. "Now it's all about pseudo-bikers with \$40,000 Harleys and \$200-a-night hotel rooms. These guys whip out a credit card every time they buy a beer."

Spanish couple sign for renewable marriage

LA CORUNA (AFP) — A cautious Spanish couple are taking no chances on the prospects of wedded bliss. They've signed a legal contract for a two-year, renewable marriage. Jose Luis Ferreira, 31, and Eva Maria Alvedro, 24, have agreed to take a fresh look at their marriage in 2000 before deciding if they want to give it another go and extend it. The scheme was dreamed up in 1992 by psychologist Jesus Reiriz, who was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the contract had just as much authority as a church or state wedding.

Recluse Pynchon's letters to be published

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Literary buffs can get more insight into recluse author Thomas Pynchon, 60, later this year when more than 120 letters to his former agent, Candida Donadio, become available to scholars. The author of "The Crying of Lot 49" has been living in virtual isolation for the last 40 years. The letters, written 1963-82, reveal he was rendered "sick, almost homicidal" by a story written about him in 1964 by Dick Schapp. He also considered being a film critic for Esquire magazine saying, "I can be crisp, succinct, iconoclastic, nonconformist, nonprogrammatic... curmudgeonly, insulting, bigoted, psychotic and nitpicking."

French electoral candidate revealed all

COMPIEGNE (AFP) — Candice Vignon can't be accused of not revealing herself to voters as she fights for a seat in local elections next week. Vignon, who's standing for France's extreme-right National Front Party, is also a part-time stripper. The party's election literature for the Oise department says she's an artist, but the local weekly paper dug out a publicity shot of her wearing a native American headdress and skirt and nothing in between. Her picture advertises a strip show "with full-frontal nudity." "I don't just do that," she assured the paper. "I take part in shows and fashion events."

Phoenix police officer assaulted with donuts

MESA (R) — It's dangerous out on the mean streets of this Phoenix suburb. Just ask police officer Dean Stephan. He was fired at three times by a transient. Fortunately for the 28-year-old motorcycle cop, the fusillade was not bullets but doughnuts — jelly, glazed and plain. "I was approaching this guy and he throws something at me when I'm 25 feet away," said Stephan. "Then comes another and another. I've been hit before, but this had to be the weakest attempt at assaulting me that I've ever seen," he said.

Algeria reports 13 civilians, 7 rebels killed

ALGIERS (AFP) — Thirteen civilians and seven Islamists were killed Friday in separate incidents in towns in the south and southwest, Algerian security services, quoted by state radio, said Saturday.

The report followed one of a grenade attack on a bus in central Algiers Saturday morning in which, according to the security forces, at least 13 people were injured.

The grenade attack occurred at a bus stop outside the central post office right in the heart of the capital, some 100 metres from police headquarters, witnesses said.

They said the grenade was thrown by a young man who may have been accompanied on a stairway overlooking the bus stop as passengers pre-

pared to board the vehicle. It bounced against the bus before exploding.

Blood was evident on the ground and the windows of the vehicle were broken and part of its sheet-metal siding was blackened.

The security forces said the 13 civilians killed Friday had been assassinated in the southwest towns of Djelfa and Tissemsilt, but gave no further details.

They said four Islamists were killed in Mascara, both in southern Algeria, but did not elaborate.

There was no immediate indication of who was behind Saturday's grenade attack, although suspected Islamist extremists have made several bomb attacks on buses in

recent weeks.

Last month a home-made bomb was thrown at another bus in Algiers, wounding several people, according to officials.

Earlier, Algerian security forces reported that a bomb had exploded Thursday near a disused school in Bouskene, south of Algiers, killing one person and injuring another.

Le Main newspaper reported that another bomb attack against a school in Algiers on Wednesday had killed two people and injured 15, but an official toll put the casualty list at three injured.

The security forces also said they had gunned down eight extremists in the past few days in separate operations around the country.